Soviet Literature

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REMINISCENCES OF LENIN

NADEZHDA KRUPSKAYA

The comrade who first introduced me to Vladimir Ilyich told me he was very erudite, studied only scientific books, had never read a novel in his life and never read poetry. I was astounded. When I was young myself I had read all the classics, knew by heart practically all of Lermontov and the rest, while writers like Chernyshevsky, L. Tolstoy, and Uspensky seemed a very important factor in my life. It seemed incredible to me that here was a man who had not the slightest interest in all that.

Later, when we worked together, when I came to know Ilyich more intimately, I discovered how diligently he studied life and humanity; how he never substituted the practice of dipping into books to see how people lived for the study of living men.

But life then was such that there never seemed to be an opportunity to talk about this subject. Later, when we were already in Siberia, I discovered that Ilyich had read the classics no less than I, not only read, but reread them, all Turgenev, for example. He had an intimate knowledge of Nekrasov and Chernyshevsky. I took the works of Pushkin, Lermontov and Nekrasov to Siberia with me. Vladimir Ilyich placed them by the side of his bed, along with Hegel, and read them in the evenings, over and over again. Pushkin he liked best of all but it was not only good style he valued. For example, he liked Chernyshevsky's novel *What Is to Be Done*? in spite of its naive form and lack of great literary merit. I was surprised to see how carefully he read that novel, and noticed all the very fine nuances in it.

As far as that goes he loved everything about Chernyshevsky and had two photos of him in his Siberian album. One of the photos bears the birth and death dates of the writer in Lenin's hand. In Ilyich's album there were photos of Emil Zola and of the Russians, Herzen and Pisarev.

At one time Vladimir Ilyich read a great deal of Pisarev and liked him immensely. I remember that in Siberia we also had Goethe's *Faust* in German, and a little volume of Heine's poems. . . .

In Munich among the books Ilyich liked were Gerhardt's *Bei Mama* and *Büttnerbauer* by Pollenz.

Later during our second exile in Paris, Ilyich eagerly read Victor Hugo's *Les Châtiments*, poems about the revolution of 1848. These were written when Hugo was living in exile and were secretly imported into France: they contain a good deal of naive bombast, but still one feels the breath of the revolution in them. . . .

Later on, during the war, Vladimir Ilyich was fascinated by Barbusse's *Le Feu*, to which he attached immense significance. The book was so much in harmony with his own mood at that time. . . .

Of the modern works I remember he liked Ehrenburg's war novel. "You know that Ilya Lokhmaty (Ehrenburg's pseudonym) — well, he's made a fine job of it," he once declared. . . .

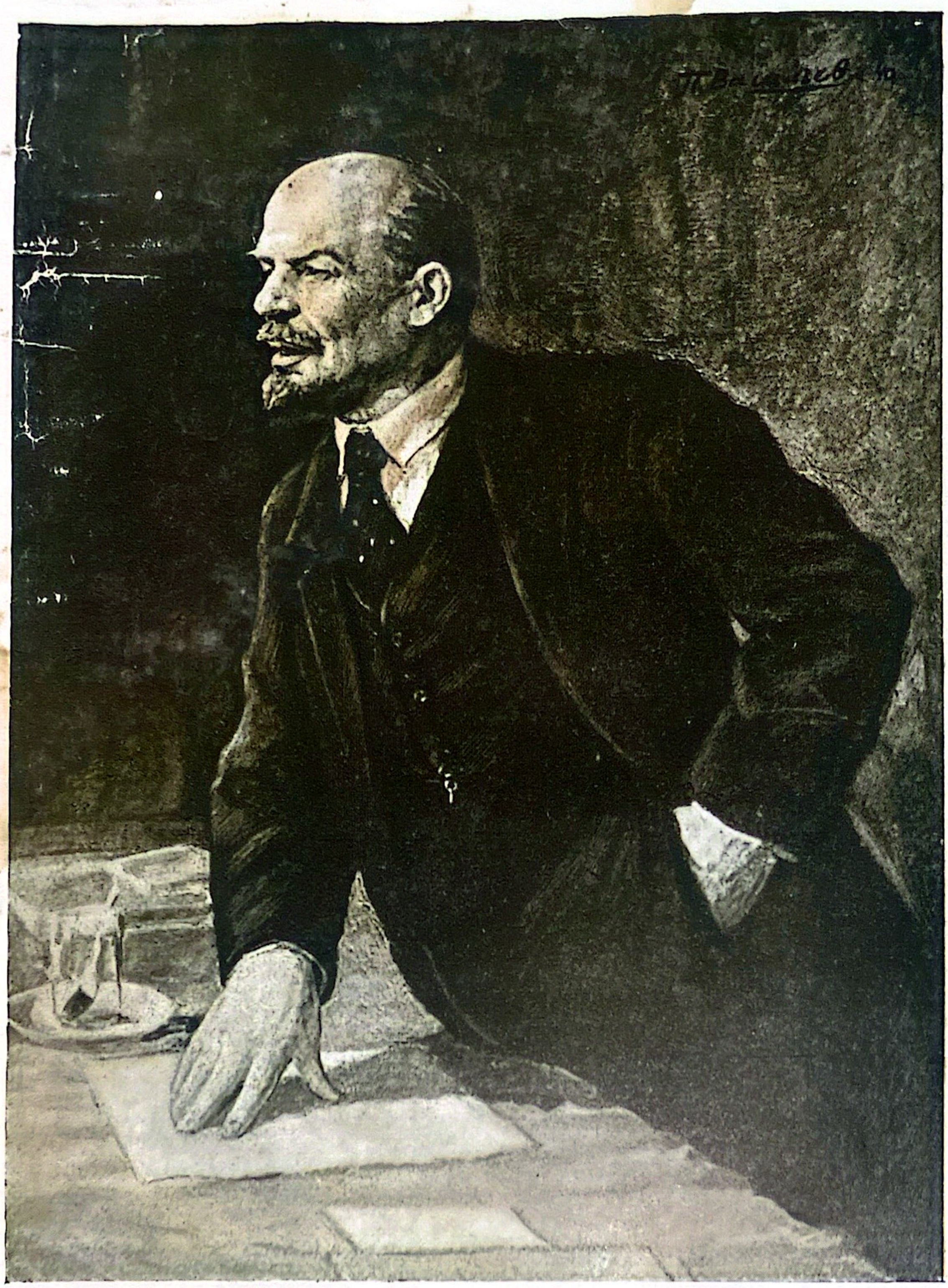
One evening, two days before his death, I read him a story by Jack London, *Love of Life*—it is still lying on the table in his room. It was a very powerful story. A sick man, dying of hunger, is making his way through a wilderness of ice, where no human being had ever before set foot, towards a harbour on a big river. His strength is giving out, he does not walk but creeps along, and beside him there creeps a wolf—also dying of hunger; there is a struggle between them: the man wins—half dead, half demented, he reaches the goal. That tale greatly pleased Ilyich. Next day he asked me to read him more of Jack London. But London's strong pieces are interspersed with extraordinarily weak ones. The next tale happened to be of quite another type—saturated with bourgeois morals. Some captain promises the owner of a ship laden with corn that he will sell the corn at a good price; he sacrifices his life merely in order to keep his word. Ilyich smiled and dismissed it with a wave of the hand.

That was the last time I read to him.

Vladimir Ilyich had a very high opinion of Alexei Maximovich Gorky as a writer. He particularly liked his *Mother* and the articles on the philistines published in *Novaya Zhizn*—Vladimir Ilyich himself loathed all manifestations of philistinism. He enjoyed *Lower Depths* and the *Story of The Falcon* and *The Song of the Storm Petrel*, he liked their rhythm; other pieces by Gorky that he liked were *Bawdy Face* and *Twenty-Six Men and a Girl*.

I remember how eager he was one day to go and see *Lower Depths* at the Moscow Art Theatre and I remember how he enjoyed hearing *My University Days* read to him during the last days of his life.

Gorky's chief characters were workers, the poor people of the towns, the "lower depths", those strata of the people which interested Lenin more than any others; he described life as it is in its concrete form,



he saw life with the eyes of a man who hates oppression, exploitation, triviality and mental poverty, he saw life with the eyes of a revolutionary. That which Gorky wrote was near and dear to Ilyich.

In a letter which he wrote me in 1930 Gorky said: "When he talked with me about literature during those years on Capri he gave very precise and terse characterizations of the writers of my generation, he laid bare their real nature mercilessly and simply."

Ilyich had an excellent knowledge of Russian literature—to him it was a means to a knowledge of life. The more complete, diverse and profound the living images depicted in belles-lettres, the simpler they were, the more they were appreciated by Ilyich.

Vladimir Ilyich became closely acquainted with Gorky at the London Party Congress in 1907; he watched him there, talked with him and somehow drew spiritually closer to him. Ilyich wrote Gorky some interesting letters during his second exile. In these letters the figure of Lenin as a man stands out very clearly. There was a directness about the way in which Lenin wrote to Gorky telling him what he did not agree with and what excited and worried him. Ilyich usually wrote to comrades in this way but there was a special tenderness in his letters to Gorky. He often wrote very sharply but in that sharpness there was much that was peculiarly tender. The letters were always written under the direct influence of some fact, there is much of the emotional in them, a vivid reflection of alarm; there is the sadness of certain emotions and the joy of hopes. It seemed to Ilyich that Gorky would understand it all quite well. Ilyich also always wanted to convince Gorky of the correctness of his views, he always hotly defended them.

In Lenin's letters to Gorky one can see how much he was concerned for him. Everybody knows how attentive Ilyich was to people, how he was able to do things for them. Gorky himself often wrote about this. Everybody noticed it.

Alexei Maximovich's health worried Ilyich. He was always enquiring about his health, advised him to get treatment from the very best doctors, to stick to a regime (Lenin once jocularly used the Russian word "prizhim" which means compulsion under pressure), told him not to work at night.

When Ilyich was in exile he was greatly worried by the fact that he did not see much of the workers. It is true there were many workers in exile but they usually got fixed up with jobs very quickly, their lives were filled with local French or Swiss interests; life in exile very soon left its mark on them. For this reason he was always glad of the company of workers who had come abroad for a short time only. Ilyich was very pleased to work with workers from the Capri School in Longiumo. In 1913 it was planned that workers' deputies would come to Poronin (in Galicia, near Cracow). Gorky on Capri had still less opportunity of meeting Russian workers and Ilyich could well understand how painful this was for him. He sent for him to come to Poronin.

"If your health permits, come along for a litte while, do! After London and the school on Capri you ought to meet some workers."

I still have a letter written by Ilyich in June, 1919. I was then travelling on the propaganda ship "Red Star"; I wrote Ilyich about my first impressions and he got the idea that it would be a good thing to let Gorky travel like that. "I sent a telegram," he wrote, "asking whether the 'Red Star' could find a cabin for Gorky. He is coming here tomorrow and I would like to drag him out of Petrograd where he has become a bundle of nerves. I hope you and other comrades will be glad to travel together with Gorky. He's a fine fellow."

ANATOLI LUNACHARSKY

How well I remember the day and hour when I became convinced that the Moscow Art Theatre could not exist as a private enterprise and that it would have to become a State Theatre. Naturally I could not do this without a special report and without the special approval of Vladimir Ilyich. I addressed an application to him on the necessity of helping the Art Theatre, of saving it, of guiding it into the comparatively quiet haven which the academic institutions of the People's Commissariat of Education constituted at that time. Although Vladimir Ilyich should not have seen anything astonishing in my asking for a directive from him, he was nevertheless surprised: "What else can you do? If there is any theatre that we must rescue and preserve from the past it is the Moscow Art Theatre."

On several occasions Vladimir Ilyich pointed out that the cinema should and must be that branch of art which has the greatest importance for the state.

It is a powerful weapon for scientific propaganda, it is the strongest form of propaganda which acts directly on the perception and senses.

My "long talk" with Vladimir Ilyich on the cinema arose out of his keen interest in that field of art which he expressed in his letter to Comrade Litkens, written in January. Somewhere round about the middle of February, or perhaps towards the end of the month, Vladimir Ilyich asked me to come and see him for a chat. As far as I remember the talk was about certain current problems in the People's Commissariat of Education. He asked me what had been done to put into operation the papers he had sent Litkens. In my reply I gave him all the details I knew about the cinema in the Soviet Republic and of the great difficulties in the way of developing it. I told him particularly of the fact that the People's Commissariat of Education had no funds for film production in a big way and of the absence of leading workers, or rather leading workers who were Communists and could be relied on, for

this job. Vladimir Ilyich answered that he would do what he could to increase the funds allotted to the Photo and Cinema Division of the Commissariat but that he himself was fully convinced of the profit to be earned from the cinema if the matter was placed on a proper footing. He again stressed the necessity of establishing a definite proportion between entertainment films and scientific films. Unfortunately this side of the work is still very weak. Vladimir Ilyich told me that the production of new films based on Communist ideas and reflecting Soviet reality should begin with newsreels and that in his opinion the time for this had perhaps not yet come.

"If you have a good newsreel, serious and educational pictures,' then it is not important if you have some harmless film of a more or less ordinary type to attract the public. Of course, a censorship is necessary. Counter-revolutionary and amoral pictures should not be given a place."

To this Vladimir Ilyich added:

"As you begin to stand on your feet thanks to a correct system of economy, and perhaps if the general situation is better you will get a certain loan for this purpose, you must develop film production on a wider scale, and particularly, you must give a sound cinema to the masses in the towns, and still more in the villages."

Smiling, Vladimir Ilyich added:

"You have earned the reputation of being our patron of the arts, and you must remember that of all the arts the cinema is the most important to us."

KLARA ZETKIN

My first visit to Lenin *en famille* served to deepen the impressions I had already formed of him at the Party Conference and which had gained strength in a number of later talks with him. Lenin was living in the Kremlin. Before I could reach him I had to pass a number of sentry posts, a precaution that was to be explained by the unceasing attempts which the counter-revolutionaries were at that time making on the life of the leaders of the Revolution. When necessary Lenin received visitors in the magnificent state apartments. His own private quarters, however, were distinguished by their extreme simplicity and unpretentiousness. I had often been in workers' homes that were more richly furnished than the apartment of the "omnipotent Moscow dictator." When I arrived Lenin's wife and sister were at supper and I was given a most hearty invitation to join them. It was the modest supper of any average Soviet civil servant of that period, it consisted of tea, black bread, butter and cheese. Then the sister, in "honour of the guest" had to go and search for "something sweet" and was lucky enough to find a small jar of jam. It is well known that the peasants provided "their Ilyich" with an abundance of white flour, bacon, eggs, fruit, etc.; it is also well known that none of this food remained at Lenin's home but was all distributed amongst the hospitals and orphans' homes. Lenin's family very strictly maintained the principle of living under the same conditions as the masses of the people.

I had not seen Comrade Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, since March, 1915, when the International Women's Socialist Conference was held in Berne. Her friendly face with its soft and kindly eyes bore irremovable traces of the treacherous illness that tormented her. With this one exception, however, she still remained the same, the embodiment of directness, simplicity and a sort of quite puritan modesty. With her hair combed straight back and done up in a simple knot at the nape of her neck and her simple dress she impressed one as being the exhausted wife of a worker who is constantly worried about how to get everything done, how to avoid wasting time. "The first lady of the great Russian state," —according to bourgeois conceptions and terminology—Krupskaya was undoubtedly the first in her loyalty to the oppressed and suffering. She was one with Lenin in her views on the purpose and meaning of life. She was Lenin's right hand, his chief and best secretary, his convinced ideological partner, most adept in explaining his outlook, equally tireless in cleverly and tactfully winning over friends and followers and in propagating his ideas amongst the workers. In addition to this she had her own special sphere of activity to which she devoted herself wholeheartedly—that of popular education.

It would be both insulting and ridiculous to assume that Comrade Krupskaya played the role of "Lenin's wife" at the Kremlin. She worked and bore his worries with him, she cared for him as she had done all her life, as she had done when life under illegal conditions and the worst form of persecution had separated them from one another. With purely maternal care—it must be added that Lenin's sister helped her in the most kindly manner—she turned Lenin's apartment into a "hearth and home" in the finest sense of that term. Not, of course, in the sense in which the German philistines mean it but in the sense of that mental atmosphere that filled it and which served to reflect the relations which held together those who lived and worked there. One got the impression that everything was built up on the basis of truth, sincerity, understanding and kindheartedness. Although until that time I did not know Comrade Krupskaya very well, I immediately felt myself at home when I was in her company and under her care. When Lenin came, and later when a huge cat came in and was heartily welcomed by the whole family—she jumped onto the shoulder of the "terrible leader of the terrorists" and then settled down in a comfortable position on his knees—I felt as though I was in my own home or at Rosa Luxemburg's with her cat "Mimi" that all her friends remember.

When Lenin came in we three women were talking about art and education. At that moment I was expressing my admiring wonderment at the unique and titanic cultural work of the Bolsheviks, at the progress of creative forces in the country that were striving to lay

down new paths in art and education. In talking of this I did not hide the impression I had received that quite often one observed uncertainty and unclear groping, observed tentative steps and that, side by side with passionate searching for new content, new forms, new paths and new spheres in cultural life there was also some artificial "fashionableness" and imitation of western models. Lenin immediately joined the conversation in a very lively manner.

". . . The awakening of new forces, their work to build up a new culture and art in Soviet Russia," he said, "is a good thing, a very good thing. Their swift development is natural, it is to be welcomed. We have to make up for the centuries that have passed us by, and we want to do it. Chaotic tossings, a feverish seeking for new slogans, cries of Hosanna today for certain trends of art and thought, and tomorrow a call to 'crucify them'—all this is inevitable.

"The Revolution unleashes all the forces that have previously been bound and impels them from the depths to the surface of life. Here is an example, one of many. Think of the influence that was exerted on the development of our painting, sculpture and architecture by the fashions and caprices of the tsar's court, as well as by the fads and whims of the aristocrats and the bourgeoisie. In a society based on private property the artist produces for the market, he needs customers. Our Revolution has freed the artists from the oppression of these all too prosaic conditions. It has made the Soviet State their protector and customer. Every artist, whoever considers himself such, has a right to work in freedom, following his ideal and regardless of anything else.

"But, of course, we are Communists. We must not stand with folded arms and let chaos develop as it will. We must guide this process following a quite definite plan and mould its results. We are still far from that, very far indeed. I think that we too have our Doctor Karlstadts.[1] We go in too much for 'dethroning in painting.' We must keep what is beautiful, take it as a model, follow it, even if it is 'old.' Why do we have to turn away from what is genuinely beautiful, reject it as the starting point for further development, just because it is 'old'? Why do we have to worship whatever is new as a god that we must obey just because 'it is new'? Nonsense, utter nonsense! A lot of this is hypocrisy and, of course, unconscious reverence for the fashions that prevail in western art. We are good revolutionaries, but for some reason we feel obliged to prove that we too have attained 'the pinnacles of modern culture.' I, for one, am bold enough to proclaim myself a 'barbarian.' I am incapable of regarding the works of expressionism, futurism, cubism and all the other 'isms' as the highest expression of artistic genius. I don't understand them. I get no pleasure out of them!"

I could not help confessing that, like him, I was too limited in my perception to understand why a soul filled with inspiration should find its artistic expression in putting a triangle where a nose should be, and why the revolutionary striving for action should turn the human body, whose organs are knitted in a complex whole, into a soft, amorphous sack on two stilts with a five-pronged fork on either side.

Lenin burst out laughing.

"Yes, my dear Clara, it can't be helped, we are both old. We'll have to be content with the fact that in the Revolution at least, we are still young and are marching in the front ranks. We can't keep pace with the new art, we will have to lag behind.

"But," he continued, "it is not our opinion of art that matters, nor the feeling art arouses in several hundred or even a thousand among a population of millions. Art belongs to the people. Its deepest roots must lie in the very heart of the working masses. It must be such that these masses will understand and love it. It must voice the feelings, thoughts and will of these masses, must uplift them. It must awaken the artists in the masses, and serve to develop them. Are we to serve sweet biscuit to a paltry minority while the masses of workers and peasants go in need of black bread? Of course, I mean this not only literally, but figuratively as well: we should always have the workers and peasants in our mind's eye. For their sake we must learn to run things. And this applies to art and culture as well.

"In order to bring art closer to the people, and the people to art, we must first raise the general level of education and culture. How are we getting on in this respect? You are in raptures over our enormous cultural progress since we came into power. Of course, we can say without boasting that we have done a great deal, a very great deal, in this respect. We not only 'chopped off heads,' as the Mensheviks of all countries accuse us of having done, including Kautsky in the country you came from; we have also enlightened them; we have brought enlightenment into many heads. But it is many only compared with the past, compared with the sins of the classes and cliques dominant in the past. The workers' and peasants' thirst for learning and culture, which we have aroused and are stimulating, is boundless—not only in Petrograd and Moscow, in the industrial centres, but far beyond them, even in the smallest villages . . .

..."Illiteracy fits in very badly, it does not fit in at all with the work of restoring the country. The latter, Marx said, must be the work of the workers and, I will add, the peasants themselves, if they want to achieve freedom. Our Soviet system makes this task easier. Owing to it, thousands of working people are now learning in the various Soviets and Soviet bodies to perform the work of restoration. They are men and women 'in their prime,' as they say in your country. Most of them grew up under the old regime and consequently received no education or culture, but now they are possessed with a real thirst for learning. We are determined, it is our aim to draw ever

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[1] Karlstadt (1483—1541), a prominent leader of the Reformation and enemy of the Catholic Church, was known for his hostility to higher education, science and art.

new sections of men and women into Soviet work and provide them with a certain practical and theoretical education . . .

..."One of us—I forgot who it was—started talking about some things that particularly struck one in the field of art and culture, adding that they were due to "the conditions of the moment." Lenin retorted:

"I know all that! Lots of people are sincerely convinced that the difficulties and dangers of the present period can be overcome *panem et circenes*. With bread, of course, they can! As for circuses—well, I don't object. But they should not forget that circuses are not real art, great art, but a more or less pleasing entertainment. Moreover, we should not forget that our workers and peasants bear no resemblance to the lumpen-proletariat of Rome. They are not maintained at the expense of the state, but themselves maintain the state by their labour. They made the Revolution and defended its cause, shedding rivers of blood and making innumerable sacrifices. Surely our workers and peasants deserve something more than circuses. They have gained the right to true great art. For that reason we are first of all introducing the broadest popular education and training. It will lay the basis for culture—of course, on condition that the question of bread be solved. On this basis a truly new, great Communist art should grow up which will create a form corresponding to its content. In this sphere our 'intellectuals' will have to solve lofty problems of the first magnitude. By understanding and fulfilling those tasks they will be paying their debt to the proletarian Revolution for opening wide to them, too, the door that leads from mean conditions of life to the broad expanses so incomparably characterized in the *Communist Manifesto*."

That night, it was already very late, we touched on still other subjects. But all impressions of them, however, pale before the remarks which Lenin made on questions of art, culture and popular education.

ILYA EHRENBURG

THE STORM

(Chapters from a Novel)

The novel The Storm on which I am working at present deals with the life of rank-and-file intellectuals in the Soviet Union and France.

The action of the novel begins in the summer of 1939 and will lead up to our victory in 1945. Experts have dealt with the economic and strategic reasons for this victory; I believe that the novelist's duty is to show the psychological factors of victory—the spiritual strength of Soviet people. The action of the novel takes place now in the Soviet Union, now on different fronts, now in France; I wish to show the role the Patriotic War played in the liberation and spiritual regeneration of Europe.

The chapters published here are from the first part of the novel.

Ilya Ehrenburg

(Summer, 1939)

Sembat and Sergei somehow took to one another at once. Sitting on a stool too low for him, his long legs sprawled out awkwardly, Sergei smiled and nodded whenever Sembat showed him a picture he liked.

Sembat asked what the Russian landscape was like and Sergei launched into a description of the steppes and forests of his native land.

"Our landscape has to be sung, not painted," he added. "It flows like an elusive melody. One moment there seems to be nothing there and then suddenly the sun breaks through the clouds and lights up a strip of field, or a little girl comes tripping down a path, or else everything darkens before a storm and then how glorious it is! And the stillness—that is music too. . . ."

"I have been looking at you all this time and wondering why you are so difficult to paint," said Sembat. "And now you have revealed the secret—your face is like your native landscape. It is forever changing. I see not form but expression. It would be devilishly hard to paint your portrait but I should like to do it very much. Are you staying long in Paris?"

Before Sergei could answer someone knocked at the door. It was Madaud.

"Oh, you have visitors, Sembat?" she said in surprise.

She greeted Sergei with polite reserve. Sergei too, was rather shy at first. But soon the awkwardness of the first few minutes passed and an animated conversation ensued. They talked about everything under the sun; about the fairs in Brittany, about the rivers of Russia with logs floating on their placid bosoms, about Ronsard's sonnets that are brimful of happiness touched with wistful sadness, about sweet wine that has a bitter aftertaste, about the French saying of a man who is made melancholy by drinking that "he has a sad wine," and about the white nights of the North.

"Ah, that is where I should like to live," said Madaud. "One could dream there. Don't look at me like this! I know that everybody works in your country. I should work as well. In the daytime. But at night. . . How wonderful it must be to see the world in another light than by day. Everything must look so different on a white night: houses, sky, people."

"But then in winter it is dark for twenty-four hours a day."

"I shouldn't mind. It would be happiness to live in another world if only for an hour. . . ."

"But you are living in another world," observed Sembat, "when you work."

"Ah, but what am I in painting? A mere student. I shall be learning my ABC for another ten years. And I want to say my word now. Feeble and faltering, perhaps, but something of my own, something into which I would put everything I have. . . ."

Sembat listened to Madaud in wonder. He had known her for a long time and now he recalled an amusing incident from her schooldays. Her class had been told to write a composition on the subject of the sense of duty in Corneille's plays. Madaud had written a tale about a star that had fainted when it saw the astronomer who fell in love with her. And then someone presented it with a ball gown with a long train because it is more comfortable to faint in a long gown, but the dressmaker sought in vain for the star, for it had long since turned to gold dust and only the astronomer remembered a comet that had swept through the skies. "What nonsense!" the teacher had exclaimed indignantly. And Madaud had patiently explained that she had read about a falling star in one of Corneille's plays.

Note: The complete novel will be published in English by Knopf Publishers, New York.

That was eleven years ago, but Madaud was still the same.

On the table stood a bouquet of meadow flowers.

"Do they tell fortunes with daisies in your country, too?" Madaud asked.

"Oh yes. 'He loves me, he loves me not, he presses me to his heart, he sends me to the devil. . . .'"

"Oh, that's much nicer than ours! French girls try to bargain with the emotions. They say: 'he loves me a little, he loves me a lot, he loves me madly. . .' I like your 'sends me to the devil' very much. How do you say it in Russian?"

"Madaud, stop tearing the flowers, you are spoiling my still life."

Madaud began to sing an old Roussillon song in a low, husky voice:

The soldier roamed all over the earth,
The soldier fought for the land of his birth.
He returned to his wife at dead of night,
She saw a stranger by candle light.
She loved the stranger by candle light,
And seared his lips with a burning kiss,
But bitterness mingled with his bliss —
  Soldier, here's happiness at last!
  Soldier, all happiness is past!
Your wife is being untrue to you.
Your wife is betraying you with you.
  He couldn't kill her,
    He loved her yet,
  He couldn't forgive her,
    For he couldn't forget.
At dawn the soldier . . ."

She broke off. "I don't want to sing any more."

"What did the soldier do?"

"He went away. Perhaps it was not his wife at all. Probably it was quite another woman. Perhaps he invented he had a wife. Perhaps he is still roaming round the world."

One thought obsessed Madaud. She wished that Sembat would go away and leave them alone, if only for a moment. Couldn't he guess? She simply had to tell Sergei . . . what, she did not know, but she had to tell him something.

"Sembat, darling, go and put the kettle on and I'll make some coffee."

At last Sembat understood. He went into the little kitchen at the back.

"When are you leaving?" Madaud asked Sergei quickly.

"I don't know. Soon, I believe."

When Madaud spoke her voice sounded to her like the voice of a stranger. "That's good," she said, "otherwise your friends might think you had fallen in love with Paris."

He shrugged his shoulders. How irritating she was. And yet she was very sweet. Why did she attract him? Perhaps it was her curious detachment, that wistful gaiety that hovers over Paris like a light summer mist.

"Have I offended you?"

"Oh no! You have told me so many interesting things about your country. I am very grateful, very." She rose. "Sembat, what on earth is taking you so long!"

In the doorway she turned back to Sergei, and with a droll grimace she repeated the Russian words he taught her: "K chortu poshlyot" (he'll send me to the devil).

"Sembat, where is the coffee pot? What have you been doing so long?"

"I thought you wanted. . . ."

"I want coffee. Go to your guest, I shall see to the coffee myself."

Half an hour passed. When Sembat went to find out how the coffee was coming along he found Madaud in tears..

"Go away! No, wait. . . Tell him that I don't feel well, that I have a heart attack or something. I can't see him, I can't. . . ."

That night Sergei could not sleep for thinking of Madaud. What had he done to annoy her? Had she been mocking him? No, one does not joke in that way. . . But why could he not put her out of his mind? Who was this girl, this complete and utter stranger who had stepped uninvited into his life without any of the rights of long standing friendship, intimate talks or passion? How had she managed to grow so close to him that he seemed to be talking to her now, whispering words of comfort in her ear.

He tossed on his bed, cursing himself for being such a fool, but still he could not stop thinking about her. And suddenly he burst out laughing as he recalled the comical way she had pronounced the Russian words he had taught her.

Next morning he found a small, blue envelope waiting for him.

"Yesterday I behaved badly again," he read. "Do not be angry with me. I am suffering for it. You said that in your country there are Juliets who cannot express themselves. I am also a dumb Juliet, only a French one. I cannot enter your life, nor do I wish to. All I ask is that you agree to meet me. Perhaps I shall be able to put into words what I have to say to you. I shall wait for you tonight at eight o'clock on the Voltaire embankment near the monument. If you cannot or do not wish to come, I shall not take offence. I shall talk to you from afar. I have chosen the Voltaire embankment because there are few people about at that hour and we shall be able to talk. Forgive the scrawl, I am in a hurry and dare not attempt to rewrite this. Madaud."

A fine rain was falling when Sergei reached the embankment. He was early, but Madaud was already waiting for him. They plunged hastily into conversation, talking about the rain, about Voltaire, about Sembat's paintings, trying desperately to hide their agitation. They walked now slowly and hesitantly as if uncertain of the direction, now swiftly, so swiftly indeed that a casual observer might have thought they were hurrying somewhere. But they did not know themselves where they were going. They crossed over to the right bank and walked up to the Place de la Concorde which sparkled like a dazzling ballroom. They went up the Champs Elisées, blinking at the lights and oblivious of the bustling throngs. Presently they found themselves in the Bois de Boulogne. Usually the Bois was full of strolling couples, but the rain had driven them all away. They walked along a deserted avenue and everything around them breathed of autumn at the height of summer.

They seemed to have said all there was to say, yet not a word had been uttered of that which filled their hearts. They had to talk because they were afraid to fall silent. But at last there came a time when words were exhausted and the only sound was the rain whispering in the leaves.

Madaud stopped. She glanced up at Sergei and backed away as if frightened by what she read in his eyes. Then, still silent, she came up to him, threw her arms around his neck and began to kiss him. He forgot everything, he could only whisper softly: "Madaud . . . Madaud. . ." And on her face tears mingled with rain drops.

"I haven't told you what I wanted to after all," Madaud said after a while.

"What was it you wanted to say?"

"I think I have just said it. . . ."

That was how their love began. After that they met nearly every evening. No one knew of it. They often hurt one another, quarrelled and made it up again, but even those quarrels were only part of a great and complete happiness.

(Summer 1939)

Professor Dumas' servant, the rosy-cheeked Marie, was a garrulous creature. She was fond of gossiping about her master to the greengrocer or the concierge.

"When I first went to work for him," she would say, "I'd heard he was terribly absentminded. People said he was so wrapped up in his thoughts, you could serve up anything you liked and he wouldn't know the difference. But they were very much mistaken. A guest mightn't notice anything was wrong, but if the mutton was just the slightest bit overdone he'd say right away: 'Well, Marie, we've disgraced ourselves this time. . .' And he'd pour out some wine, hold it up to the light and drink it down as though he were rinsing his mouth. Sixty-four he is and you ought to see how he dances! Went out shooting and brought back two partridges, got himself all daubed with mud, it took me three days to get his clothes clean. There was an old chap like that in our village. Married a young girl at the age of sixty-seven and drank all the other guests under the table at the wedding. That isn't so unusual for country folk. But a scientist—I'd never have believed it!"

But in her heart of hearts Marie adored her professor. He was such a gay old boy and so considerate. Whenever they had visitors he would call her in and say: "And now let us drink to our sorceress, for it takes magic to make a sauce like this."

Today she was braising meat in red wine. "I'm 'having some foreigners for dinner," the professor had said. "Put your best foot forward, Marie. . . ."

Although Marie declared that an old wag like her master could not be a scientist, Professor Dumas' name was known far beyond the boundaries of France. Hence Johann Keller felt quite flattered when Dumas said to him: "I have read your paper. There are some disputable points. But on the whole it is good! You are here alone? With your wife? Splendid! I should like you both to come and dine with me on Friday."

Nevertheless Keller was rather shocked when he saw Dumas in this domestic environment. He had pictured the home life of a famous professor quite differently. At dinner his host discoursed enthusiastically about Chaplin, about the proper way to prepare onion soup—calling in Marie for consultation—then suddenly switched to Marseilles anecdotes, laughing uproariously and wiping his eyes with his napkin. Keller was politely respectful through it all. He held Dumas in such high esteem that even the jokes seemed clever.

He was a fair-haired man who wore large horn-rimmed spectacles, stiff and diffident in his bearing. In vain did Dumas keep refilling his glass with Chablis in the hope that his guest would unbend. Keller was always the same. Even in his childhood he had never been naughty; the sight of a broken cup or a rent in his trousers offended him and he preferred a book to the boisterous games his playmates indulged in. Later too as a young man he had held himself aloof from other young men of his age. While his fellow students drank, gambled, vied with one another for the favours of buxom waitresses, engaged in politics, loudly advocated the massacre of Communists and Jews and the annexation of the "corridor" and Alsace, Keller dreamed of a quiet scholarly existence in some pleasant little town where the lime trees blossomed, where young girls smiled shyly over pots of geraniums and old folk lingered over their last pipes of tobacco. Then the Nazis came to power. Keller treated the whole thing with indifference. What had an anthropologist to do with party strife? Streseman or Hitler—what difference did it make? . . He had his own work, his books.

For four years Gerta was considered to be Keller's fiancée. They met frequently in tea shops, walked together in the park, kissed occasionally. But he was in no hurry to get married. He wanted to establish himself in life first and make sure that his feeling for Gerta was genuine. He believed he had learned Gerta's character thoroughly, but he was mistaken. Marriage and the birth of two children transformed the slender, timid, dreamy maiden who had sighed wistfully with joy or tenderness, into a buxom matron with domineering tendencies. She believed her husband to be most unpractical and unworldly, she was certain that he was always being deceived, and, conscious of her responsibility for the future of her children, she drove Keller nearly frantic with advice that smacked of command. She would not let him go out without a woollen scarf, she insisted that he inquire after the health of the dean's maiden aunt and that he be the first to contribute to the "winter help" fund.

When Keller began to work on his paper on the racial peculiarities of the North American Indians, Braun had remarked: "A

rather delicate subject in this period. . ." Alarmed, Gerta had endeavored to persuade her husband to change his theme, but he was adamant, for the subject interested him.

Professor Dumas had read Keller's book with interest and had filled the margins with queries and exclamation marks.

The blue-eyed, full-breasted Gerta could not help comparing the professor with her husband. How youthful the Frenchman looked! And he must be at least thirty years Johann's senior! Johann was working much too hard, he was incapable of relaxing. . . And now. . . Had they come to Paris merely to waste time talking about some silly Indians! It wasn't every year one had the good fortune to make such a trip. How many times had she begged Johann to take her to the *Folies-Bergères*, but he kept putting it off. And now they would be leaving in a week. Why, they hadn't even gone up the Eiffel tower yet! But this Frenchman was most hospitable, though he certainly did not behave like an eminent scientist. Perhaps he was not as important as Johann thought? The dinner was tasty but why was the furniture so shabby? And such cheap china. . . An ordinary schoolteacher in Germany lived better than this. How queer for a scientist to tell such stupid anecdotes. But then these French were all the same, a frivolous lot! True, Napoleon had been a Frenchman. Evidently they had degenerated a great deal since then. Like this professor. . . .

It was positively indecent for a man of his age and position to guffaw like an ordinary bursch. . . .

"And how do you like Paris, Mrs. Keller?"

Her large bosom heaved.

"Oh, Monsieur Dumas, Paris is wonderful. I think it is the gayest city in the world."

Then, as if divining her thoughts, Dumas said:

"That's true, Paris is gay. But it is not only gay. Monsieur Keller knows that we can work as well as play. I do not understand why some people in your country speak so slightingly of us. They come here, take a look at Montmartre and off they go firmly convinced that we are 'degenerating.'"

Dumas laughed. How disgustingly he laughed, thought Mrs. Keller, more like snorting.

Her husband had reddened at the professor's words.

"You must not pay attention to everything that is written in our country," he said. "Politics, you know. . . ."

"Ah yes, politics. I never let politics cross my threshold. Here too the stuff they print in the newspapers sometimes makes you want to spit in disgust. Of course, in our country it is permitted to spit, but in Germany. . . I daresay all the spittoons are registered there, so that you know where to spit and when."

"I assure you, Monsieur Dumas, that there are plenty of people in my country who are revolted by all these absurdities. . . Can you imagine how I feel when I hear some people trying to belittle French culture merely in order to pay lip service to politics. I realize how much I am indebted to you. . . ."

"But can you openly say that they are writing rubbish?"

"Certainly. I do so in my own circle."

"'In your own circle?' That means Mrs. Keller, I suppose. Now, that strikes me as humiliating!"

"You must understand, Monsieur Dumas, that conditions in Germany are somewhat different. . . Our people are accustomed to self-discipline. They do not really mind moral blinkers of this kind. In fact they need them. To me blinkers may be an inconvenience, but my landlord is delighted with them, so is my baker and all my neighbours. For them the new regime means order first and foremost. I do not belong to the party myself, and I do not agree with its ideology. But to do them justice they have done away with unemployment. And as for our own field, although it touches directly on the principal doctrine of the party, we are permitted to work as freely as before."

Dumas jumped up, ran into his study and came back with Keller's book.

"Just a minute, just a minute. You say that you can work freely? We shall see. . . Let me find the page. Ah, here it is. You give the blood groups of Indians according to data published in Santiago. Very interesting and most instructive. It turns out that 91 per cent of the Indians belong to group O, which your dolts are glorifying. But, my dear friend, you do not complete your argument. I am not speaking of conclusions, only of figures. On the next page where you deal with general data you refer to Ramm and Sokarras, but what about Lipschitz? You omit to mention him for some reason. Once you are making a general summary you cannot overlook this fact—see, I have added it here—Group O—arch-Nordic Icelanders, 56 per cent, which is exactly, within a fraction, the figure for Ismen Jews!"

"I am aware of these figures, Monsieur Dumas. But you know yourself that I could not use them. . . ."

"But why not, pray? Do you think Galileo enjoyed being in prison? No, once you have devoted yourself to science you must be consistent to the end. It is not a card game, you can't get out of it by saying: 'pass.'"

Observing the embarrassment on Keller's face he stopped. Confound it, he thought, you're a fine host. First you feed your guests and then you go and ruin their digestion.

"Forgive me, Monsieur Keller. You must be weary enough of these arguments. Your book is extremely valuable, notwithstanding. Let me recommend this Armagnac with your coffee. . . ."

After that Dumas surpassed himself as a host. He was so kind, so cordial that even Mrs. Keller softened and she showed the professor the photograph of her children.

"That one will be a captain by the look of him," remarked Dumas. "Quite the little sea wolf, isn't he?"

Mrs. Keller melted. Everything would have been fine had Anna Roth not turned up at that point. When she saw the visitors, she drew back in confusion.

"I just dropped in for a minute, Monsieur Dumas. You said you had a book for me. . . ."

But Dumas persuaded her to sit down and drink a cup of coffee. She complied in silence. The Kellers too said nothing.

"Anna," Dumas remarked in an effort to break the ice, "Monsieur Keller here is an extremely talented scholar. And please do not imagine that he is a Nazi. He told me himself that there are plenty of fools in Germany today. Just think of it, even in his field he is bound hand and foot. So you needn't worry . . ." and turning to Keller, Dumas explained: "I say this because Mademoiselle Roth does not have a very high opinion of your Nazis. She is a Communist. She was in Spain. You may speak quite frankly in her presence. . . ."

The heavy silence that followed was broken at last by Keller's cold remark:

"The Spanish climate must be rather unpleasant for one who is not accustomed to it. I hear that the summers are unbearably hot."

"Yes, it is very hot there in summer."

Mrs. Keller rose.

"You will excuse us. But it is already half past four, and we promised to be home by four."

They made the journey to the hotel in silence. As soon as they reached their room the storm burst.

"You are as simple as a schoolboy!" she began. "I told you we ought to consult Dr. König before accepting the invitation of that old fool. . . ."

"Gerta, what are you saying? Dumas is a great scientist."

"And an idiot. Now he will go around telling everybody that you are against the régime. As if you didn't know what terrible gossips the French are! He must have deliberately invited that German Communist. He wanted to drag us into some ugly business. You have enough enemies as it is. After that book of yours they have only been waiting for a chance to pounce on you. . . ."

"You are exaggerating, Gerta. Professor Berhardt praised it highly."

"Berhardt isn't everybody. And you know as well as I do that Klietsche criticized it severely. If his article hasn't been printed yet that doesn't mean it won't be. They have only to find out how you behaved in Paris. People who have children must be more cautious. You risk losing everything."

"I never thought Dumas would talk politics."

"You are as childish as Rudi! They all hate us! I don't understand how you can fail to see it. This place is full of pitfalls for people like us. That German Communist woman! For all you know she may be mixed up in the assassination of the councillor."

"But, Gerta, how could we have known that she would be there?"

Mrs. Keller retired to a corner and wept. Instead of having a good time in Paris, Johann had picked up these awful new acquaintances. Why, you could be sent to jail for such talk alone! Dr. König had warned Johann that one had to be very careful in Paris. . . What would happen to the children if Johann were to be thrown out of the institute? She remembered how Dumas had said that Rudi would be a captain. The remark that had touched her maternal heart, now made her indignant. The old clown! He had lured her trusting Johann into a trap!

"Listen, Johann, you must go to Dr. König and tell him that we met Anna Roth at Dumas' house."

"Her name is probably neither Anna nor Roth. . . ."

"It doesn't matter. You can describe her appearance. She visits Dumas and they can easily establish her identity. If you have a grain of common sense left, you will go at once to the embassy. Dr. König is there until six. . . ."

Keller waited for a long time in the large, uncomfortable reception room. He cursed his wife, Dumas, Dr. König and the whole world. How stupid and degrading it all was! He, a scientist, whose work was esteemed by Berhardt and Dumas, to be compelled to go and report like a common spy. . . Disgusting. But there was nothing to be done about it. . . It was best not to start anything with the Nazis. Klietsche was only awaiting his chance. He declared that Johann was a "Lamarckist". For all he knew, they would be calling him a Marxist next. . . He had spent enough sleepless nights waiting for the Gestapo. . . Gerta was right. Yet how revolting it was! Dumas was at liberty to say anything that came into his head. Why, he had even dared to mention Galileo! He ought to live in Germany. Why did the French always manage to arrange their lives so well? The Germans were surely no worse, and no more stupid than they. It was the French who had reduced Germany to despair. The French were to blame for Hitler. . . But they themselves were gay and carefree, eating, drinking and even making fun of us. . . What had he said to Dumas? Nothing terrible. He had even stressed that the present régime was the right one for Germany. . . Of course, they could always distort his words. . . As Klietsche had done with his book. . . And to add to everything there was that confounded Communist woman! He really must tell König about her otherwise he might find himself involved in something. But it was humiliating nevertheless!

As soon as he had told Dr. König everything Keller experienced an immediate sense of relief. Thank God it was over! Dr. König pressed his hand warmly:

"Thank you! You have behaved like a true German. All this is extremely important. . . ."

Keller left the embassy not only calmer but with a sense of pride: say what you like but he was serving his country. And Germany after all was Germany. . . Why had he thought it degrading? Prejudice! After all, it was not a family affair, that woman might really be a terrorist for all he knew. He had merely done his duty.

And Keller returned in such an excellent humour that Gerta's dream finally came true: they went to the *Folies-Bergères*. Looking at the half-naked girls Mrs. Keller was now admiring, now derisive. True, they danced gracefully and they knew how to make themselves alluring, but really one must be a degenerate to make love to a woman who hadn't even any buttocks to slap. . . They

were all lines, but where were the breasts, the hips? You couldn't last long like that. But at the same time, it was very gay and there was such vivacity and astonishing grace in their movements. At home everything was much more crude. . . Now they would have something to talk about when they returned to Heidelberg. She was glad that her poor Johann was having a chance to amuse himself a little. He worked so hard, and then there was this business of the afternoon.

But Keller was not enjoying himself. An indescribable weariness had taken possession of him. In his tired brain everything was confused—Dumas, the wine, Gerta's tears, and Dr. König. . . He no longer considered whether his action had been good or bad, he only knew that he was worn out, that he wanted neither wine, women nor song.

That night Dumas recalled Keller's pained look when he had been unable to answer his questions. What made me do it? he thought. It must be bad enough for him without my adding to his troubles. A delightful régime, to be sure! Not to be able even to give complete data on group O! No, we French would never stand for that! I'm sorry for Keller all the same, a capable and obviously honest man.

Marie was hurt by the visitors' indifference to her culinary arts.

"Why did I go to all that trouble to make that ragoût au gratin!" she grumbled. "Did you see how he ate, Monsieur Dumas? He didn't even care what he was swallowing. And his nasty cow of a wife. The next time they come I'll serve them boiled potatoes. Let them feed their faces. . . ."

Dumas smiled.

"You must not be so hard on them. Marie. They are good people even though they're rather bores at table."

(1940)

Natasha's father, Dmitri Alexeyevich Krylov was sometimes jokingly called "Don Quixote from Lipetsk" although he came from Tambov and not Lipetsk and in appearance bore no resemblance whatever to the knight of the pale countenance. He had a ruddy complexion, a well-padded frame and an amiable disposition. They called him "Don Quixote" because of the interest he took in other people's troubles.

"Anybody would think you were a deputy," grumbled Varvara Ilyinichna, his wife. She worried about the health of her fifty-year-old husband who was kept so busy from morning till night that he barely had time to eat and sleep. "I'm a Communist, my dear," Dmitri Alexeyevich would reply gravely. "That gives me many responsibilities."

Krylov was a doctor and worked in a hospital. But people came to him with complaints that had nothing to do with throat or nasal trouble. The word had got around that Krylov would never refuse to help anyone in trouble. "How on earth do you find time for everything Dmitri Alexeyevich?" the Party organizer had remarked on one occasion with mingled admiration and annoyance. "You ought to think of yourself too. What have housing conditions got to do with us? There are special departments for that. . . ."

Dmitri Alexeyevich flared up:

"I am surprised to hear a member of the Party talk like that! I don't care how many special departments there are, a human being is a human being. How do you expect me to cure this woman of nasal trouble when she has been unjustly deprived of her flat? She is staying with her sister now, and the sister has tuberculosis, you understand? It isn't enough for me to stick my nose into other people's noses. It isn't enough, my friend, to discover a method of curing diseases, we have to know how to apply that method. It takes geniuses to discover methods. You hear me, geniuses! And if a doctor is a fathead the most brilliant discoveries won't help him to cure his patient. You can't build Communism without Communists! One disease can have millions of variations and that is where the proper approach comes in. That's something you fail to understand. If I am a Communist everything, absolutely everything must concern me. Or perhaps you think that I ought to hang out a sign 'nose and throat only'? Now, look here, if you don't want to help this woman, I'll take up her case myself. I'll go to the Moscow Soviet right now!"

"Don Quixote from Lipetsk" had a tremendous lust for life. It was enough for Natasha to mention something about the strata and fossils she was studying for her father to cease whatever he was doing and listen with open-mouthed interest. After reading some book his wife, a librarian, had brought for him, he would cry: "Well, Varya, what do the readers say? In my opinion the heroine was an absolute fool. . ." He could discuss the merits of some fictional character for a week on end, and if he did not like a novel he would scold the author roundly. "Why the dickens did you have to invent such nonsense?" he would rail as if the luckless writer stood before him. "A human being is neither a germ nor a rolling mill. He's far more complex than that! If you can't get inside of him you'd better not try to write at all. No one compels you to write. You'd better work to produce the paper and we'll print Tolstoy. Just think of it, there's a paper shortage, and time is also limited, a dozen lifetimes wouldn't be enough to read all the good books that have been written, and he goes and turns out a piece of rubbish like this!"

Whenever Natasha went to the theatre with her father his behaviour would both amuse and embarrass her. Dmitri Alexeyevich took everything so much to heart. He worried over the fate of the heroine and kept whispering to Natasha during the acts: "Do you think she'll understand?" He was so afraid that the heroine would discover the villain's treachery too late, or that the jealous husband would not find out the truth in time.

On his trips out of town he would converse affably with everyone he met, admiring, condemning, questioning: "What wonderful ap-

ples!" "And this is what you call a school? It's an eyesore!" He would spend hours chatting with the local inhabitants, and he could never tear himself away from a machine until he had found out what made it go. And licking his lips as he ate Siberian dumplings or cream cheese pies, he would murmur enthusiastically: "What a country, what a country we have!"

That is why Valya Steshenko came to Dr. Krylov. She had neither nose nor throat trouble, only a secret longing to be a film star, although no one in the institute had suspected her of any talent. When she saw Dmitri Alexeyevich, Valya was taken aback. She had imagined him to be a quiet little man with glasses. Instead she found a big, burly individual furiously blowing a fag-end out of his cigarette holder.

"Well, what is it?" he barked. "Out with it. Only be as brief as you can. I'll be late for the hospital."

"Golubeva advised me to come to you. You may remember her, Antonina Vassilievna. . ."

"No, I don't remember and why should I? All right, Golubeva advised you to come to me. Now, out with it!"

Valya had thought of what to say beforehand but now she forgot everything.

"You treated her for sinus trouble, and you helped her to get registered in the house. . . ."

"I don't remember at all. There are at least a hundred thousand Golubevas in the world, and as many with sinus trouble, and as for registration, there are millions of them. . . Well, what's the matter? Don't they want to renew it?"

"No, it isn't that. Everything is all right with her, only she advised me to come to you. Please don't think I would have dared to come myself. I wrote to the newspaper but the correspondence department replied that they were taking the matter up, and it all went back to Semipalov again. . . ."

"My dear child, will you please try to be more explicit? I haven't got all day, you know. Or perhaps you will go to the hospital and receive my patients for me? Tell me as briefly as you can, what is your trouble?"

"It isn't my trouble really. . . But please let me tell you from the beginning. She isn't to blame at all. Glazkov ordered her to issue sixty metres of cloth from the warehouse. She wanted to take a receipt but he shouted at her: 'What's the matter, don't you trust your boss!' She had only been working for two months. She's only nineteen and her mother's an invalid. And he got away with it, because his brother-in-law is a prosecutor. But she got three years. Her mother is terribly upset!"

"I don't understand."

"It is easy to ruin a person's life, anyone can do that. . . ."

"Now listen, young lady. Stop talking and just answer my questions. What is the name of the young woman who pinched the cloth?"

"She didn't! It was Glazkov who stole it, she is perfectly innocent!"

"Never mind that. Answer my questions. What is the innocent woman's name?"

"Nadya Karnaukhova."

"Your sister?"

"Oh no! I'm from Kiev. She's my neighbour. I have a room in that flat. Sometimes I go in and help her mother a little, she is a complete invalid. And I used to give Nadya books to read. . . ."

Valya smiled apologetically and her unexpressive face suddenly became so attractive that Dmitri Alexeyevich stopped roaring.

"So you are not even a relative? But why are you so sure that your Nadya isn't mixed up in this ugly business?"

"She came to me in despair that time because she hadn't any receipt to show for the cloth. I frightened her still more and advised her to write a statement about it at once. I even helped her to compile it. . . .

"And Semipalov sent the paper back to Glazkov. He decided to ruin her, with the help of his brother-in-law, the prosecutor. I have brought all the documents. . . .

"The defence lawyer told me himself that he is sure she is quite innocent, but it's too bad about that brother-in-law of his. . . ."

Krylov snorted indignantly. "A district prosecutor isn't God almighty! Do you think we live in a jungle? You ought to be ashamed of yourself for letting a thing like that discourage you. At your age you ought to be ready to storm fortresses. . . Very well, I'll take up the case. Run along now, I've got to change!"

It took Krylov two months before he cleared up what he called the "confounded Karnaukhova affair". Varvara Ilyinichna was very much annoyed. "I am quite sure she stole the cloth, they all steal. . . .

"As if you hadn't enough to worry about without making a Dreyfus out of a storeroom clerk!" But her husband did not listen to her. He went to Labazov, a newspaper man he had met at Natasha's.

"A frightful affair, Semyon Ivanovich! I need your help urgently. It looks as if the press will have to intervene!"

And he told Labazov the whole story in every detail. Semyon Ivanovich listened with a bored expression. When Krylov had finished he looked at him with sleepy eyes and said:

"It's a pity you have taken this affair so much to heart, Dmitri Alexeyevich. She got three years, you say? No doubt she deserved it. . . .

"And it isn't so terrible. She'll work it out and it may do her good. Better drop the whole business!"

Krylov left him in a fury. "Your Olga," he told Natasha, "has a frozen codfish for a husband!"

Dmitri Alexeyevich was not the man to retreat. He was convinced that the girl was innocent, and finally he persuaded the republican prosecutor to have the case retried. Soon afterwards Karnaukhova was released. Glazkov was brought to trial and the Control Commission got after Semipalov. Krylov was radiant. He even listened calmly when Varvara Ilyinichna grumbled: "That's all very fine, but you ought to take care of yourself."

"But, think of it, Varya," he argued, "it is not easy to give birth to a human being, you know yourself how it was. You carried Natasha for nine long months and howled like a stuck pig when she was born. And after that how many years did you spend bringing her up, seeing her through the teething, the measles, and all the imaginary ailments. And remember the trouble we had when she couldn't decide

what profession to choose? But to ruin a person is a simple matter, three minutes to dip your pen into the inkwell and it's done! You think that because our population is so large we can afford to waste people? I quite agree that cloth is important. There are too many people who haven't enough clothes to wear. . . I would give that Glazkov ten years . . . let him dig ditches, the scoundrel! But don't you think the girl's life is important too? Is she any worse than cloth?"

Valya came to thank him and brought him a bunch of early violets.

"As soon as Nadya returns to Moscow she will come and see you. Her mother asked me to thank you kindly. The flowers are from me. . . ."

"What next? You'd better give them to some poetic young man. Ah, how beautifully they smell! Wait! You'll have dinner with us, won't you? Varya!" he called to his wife. "Come here. This is Valya. What did you say your surname was? Steshenko? Good, there aren't too many Steshenkos. I'll remember it. Natasha! I want you to meet Valya. This is the girl who defended her neighbour."

Although Valya was five years older than Natasha they took to each other at once. There was a gentle elusiveness about her that appealed to Natasha. Actresses must be like that, Natasha thought. . . Valya was lonely in Moscow, she longed for her friends; listening to Natasha's lighthearted chatter she felt better.

May 11th was Natasha's twentieth birthday. Her father gave her a beautiful wristwatch for a present. Natasha was delighted; she kept putting her hand to her ear and saying in surprise: "It's going," for it seemed to her that on her large red wrist the tiny watch must surely stop running.

Olga and Valya Steshenko came, and of course, Vassya. When considering whom to invite to a party, their friends would always couple the two names together "Natasha and Vassya" because one could not imagine them separated. They met often without stopping to think what it was that drew them together. Natasha usually talked a great deal while Vassya smiled and said nothing. "A wonderful girl," he told himself whenever he thought of Natasha, and it had been like that from the first.

"I like that Blakhov of yours," Dmitri Alexeyevich had once remarked to his daughter. Natasha smiled and without a shade of embarrassment replied: "So do I."

Natasha invited Sergei as well. She hesitated for a long time before deciding to invite Olga without her husband. She was afraid Olga would be offended. But Dmitri Alexeyevich did not like Labazov, and Natasha herself could not take to him. And so she did not invite Labazov. Olga was hurt but she said nothing about it. Instead she deliberately told everyone what a fine article Semyon Ivanovich had written about consideration and solicitude for people.

The young people had a good time; but Dmitri Alexeyevich appeared to enjoy himself more than anyone. He was the first to begin the dancing. He waltzed in the old-fashioned manner, hopping up and down with such gusto that Valya had to beg him to stop: "I feel giddy, Dmitri Alexeyevich." Afterwards they played games, guessing words, and inventing absurd rhymes and again Dmitri Alexeyevich beat everyone. As forfeit he had to play fortune teller. He tied a rough towel round his head, went off to Natasha's room and laid out a pack of cards, frowning with the effort to remember what came first—the queen or the king. Natasha was his first "client".

"You too? Get away with you! You know all my tricks as it is. Better send *him* in. . . ."

But when Vassya came Dmitri Alexeyevich forgot all about fortune-telling. He took a volume of verse from the shelf and began to declaim loudly, shaking the book as he read:

"Behind your silent shoulders
I hear the tremor of wings,
And with his shining eyes,
Azrail, the angel of tempests, strikes at me."

"Wonderful, isn't it? What a choice of words! Marvellous!

"Now that's poetry! Not the sort of thing Labazov orders over the phone: 'Give me thirty-two lines for Women's Day!'"

"Did papa tell you something nice?" Natasha asked Vassya when he came back to the living room.

"Very nice indeed. He hit the nail right on the head, in fact," replied Vassya.

Looking into Olga's calm eyes, Dmitri Alexeyevich went all professional.

"Just a moment, just a moment. I'll tell you everything. What is it the fortune tellers always say: 'heartsease', that's it, heartsease. I see it in the cards. Let me show you how the whole thing is done: these cards here stand for trouble. The hearts—you know what they mean. Then I see a happy journey. I don't quite know what you prefer, Anapa or Malakhovka. . . ."

By the time Sergei's turn came Krylov had had enough of fortune telling.

"Tell me," he said, "how do the people in Paris amuse themselves? I suppose they dance their feet off there. . . ."

While he listened eagerly to Sergei's account of life in Paris, Valya waited patiently outside the door. She was very anxious to have Dmitri Alexeyevich tell her fortune.

As soon as she entered, the doctor became the magician again. He shuffled the cards on the table and peering at them with mock gravity he intoned:

"Bardi, alasagardy, bassalagardry. . . I see all. . . She comes. He comes. He looks. She looks. Alassabardy. . . See? By the he tells wonderful stories about Paris. Ask him about it. . . And now run along and dance. But take care, or he'll whirl you off your feet. . . ."

Valya was puzzled. How on earth could Dmitri Alexeyevich have noticed that she liked Sergei? Surely she had given no sign. . . It was true, she did like him. The brother was ordinary, but he was different. . . Strange, that he was an engineer, he looked more like a poet or an actor. . . It would be nice to have a man like that for a friend!

"Goodbye," Sergei smiled pleasantly as she took her leave. "You know, I didn't catch your patronymic?"

"Vassilievna."

"Valentina Vassilievna. Would you mind. if I just call you Valya, as Dmitri Alexeyevich does?"

For a long time afterwards she remembered how he had spoken her name. It was as if he had discovered her!

(Summer 1940)

The confinement was a long and difficult one. Everyone considered the case quite hopeless. Even Professor Richet, usually so calm and confident, feared that Leontine would not pull through.

Yet she recovered. And in the dazzling brightness of a Paris May she looked down at her son with loving tenderness, gazed long at his limpid eyes that looked like two drops of pale blue enamel and seemed to her so full of meaning; at his tiny face in which she traced Leo's features and even his expression; at his tiny, perfect hands that filled her with pride. She whispered endless stories to him and nearly swooned with delight when he nuzzled at her breast. The child released her from that poignant, unendurable terror that had possessed her ever since Leo's departure.

Until then her husband had filled her life to the exclusion of all else. He had found her, a little seamstress among tens of thousands of other little seamstresses, in a dusty garden in one of the Paris suburbs and he had made her happy. Twelve years her senior, he had taken her to the theatres, initiated her into the mysteries of art, told her about books he had read and amused her with hilarious accounts of youthful escapades. He put his soul into her, the soul of an unsuccessful playwright, a fortune seeker, thrust into a world of hidebound convention. When he had left her to go to Lyons, to America, or like last summer—to Kiev she had remained behind in a sort of torpor, like a forest in winter. They had lived together for eight years, yet her love for him was as blind and unreasoning as it had been in those first few days of their acquaintance when, a foolish young creature, she had given herself to him with no thought of the future.

She had long dreamed of a child. But fate was cruel. She had only been pregnant three months when the war broke out. When she saw Leo in his army uniform she wept bitterly, already picturing him lying wounded in a vast empty field. In vain did her husband explain that on the frontiers of neutral Belgium it was not enemy bullets he had to fear so much as the lonely dreary winter evenings. She refused to be consoled. And when Leo left she wept unrestrainedly. The few days that passed before his first letter came were a torment. And only now had she found peace. Her son was a guarantee that their separation would be brief. In the tiny face, now innocent, now as wise as that of an old man, she saw Leo. And glancing up at the chestnut tree blooming outside the window she smiled with newfound happiness. She felt so lighthearted and gay that she began to prepare to leave for Bidar.

Her telegram got lost and it was two weeks before Leo learned of the birth of his son. Crazy with joy he read Leontine's letter to everybody: to his comrades in the platoon, to Lieutenant Garchay, to the innkeeper, and to the inhabitants of the village where they were stationed. He repeated the most important points over and over again: the child's weight was normal, he seldom cried and his mother said he looked like his father, and Madame Chardonnet—Leo could not remember who that delightful person was—had said that she had never seen such a splendid baby in her life. . . .

There was only one thing that somewhat marred Leo's joy: his son had been named Robert. It was not a surprise, for they had agreed the previous autumn to name the child Robert if it should be a boy. Leo realized that it was not fitting for a Parisian to answer to the name of Naum, yet he found himself thinking of his dead father quite frequently of late, and he would have liked to revive the shade of the mad tailor from Slobodka if only in the sound of the name. The old mother too would be hurt to know the grandson had not been given her late husband's name. But it couldn't be helped. His son was a Frenchman. "I think Robert is a fine name," Leo said to his comrades.

The next day he wrote to Leontine. His letter was a lengthy chronicle of paternal joy. He was still writing when Sergeant Dublé, came running in shouting:

"The Germans have crossed the border!"

It was so absurd that Leo could not believe it and cursed Dublé under his breath for being tipsy so early in the day. He finished his letter, carefully pasted down the envelope and went down to the village. There the truth dawned on him at once. The road was like a stream of molten lava: women pushing wheelbarrows, staff cars, buses packed with Belgians, nuns, artillerymen, customs officials, children who had lost their parents, soldiers without officers and officers without soldiers, carts loaded with furniture, tanks, cattle—all moving southward in wild confusion. Overturned cars, chairs and crates lay in the gutters. The panic had arisen suddenly and now nothing could stop the flood. No one knew what exactly had happened. Some said that German tanks had broken through in the rear, that the sappers had not had time to blow up the bridges, that the generals had betrayed them. There was talk of the surrender of two armies, of burning cities, of the strength of the Germans. The rumours grew in proportion as the crowd of refugees swelled. Troops coming from the south encountered this mass of fear-crazed people, frightened prefects, horror-stricken orderlies hunting for their generals, women milling hysterically among the carts, cars, tractors in clouds of hot, dry dust; soldiers going up to the front turned back, swelling the panic-stricken throngs.

The cry went up that it was useless to flee because the Germans were ahead. But the crowd merely quickened its pace. Leo suffered himself to be carried along with the tide. The blow was too sudden. Only that morning he had had a vision of Leontine pink and warm giving their son the breast. The war had seemed

miles away. What had happened? Where had the Germans come from? Surely France is stronger, he told himself dully, then laughed bitterly—how they had been deceived! He wanted to tear up the newspaper, run to the Chamber and curse violently, foully.

When night came he felt so weary that he dropped down in a field off the road. When he awoke it was growing light. One glance at the road jammed with vehicles brought everything back to him. What a mess! Fear had given way to bitterness. After he had cursed two soldiers for yelling "Germans!" at the top of their voices, he felt better. He washed himself. A bird sang in a field of oats. And Leo who was not the type that easily succumbs to depression sang his favourite song in reply:

"When spring returns
Fortune will smile . . ."

By evening he managed to locate a few men from his company. Lieutenant Garchay mustered about half a hundred soldiers from different units and they spent the night in a deserted village. The next day they were merged with a reserve regiment and ordered to dig in. Here and there some resistance was put up. Leo worked hard with his spade, lay on his belly when the German bombers appeared, then took up his spade again to bury his comrades who had been killed by the bomb. The commander of the regiment had gone to find the general and had not returned. Lieutenant Garchay fruitlessly strove to contact the division headquarters. Several German tanks passed down the road. The soldiers began to grow restless.

"What the hell are we doing here?" they muttered.

"A trap!"

"To hell with them all! The general's probably in Paris. . . ."

They headed for the south, keeping as far from the road as possible. On the bank of a river they took up positions. There were no bridges and Garchay said that it would be a simple matter to check the enemy here. At dawn German scouts appeared. Leo who was a fair marksman shot one of them. Now he was as excited as a schoolboy: this meant the nightmare was over, the Germans could be stopped! The morning passed uneventfully. The soldiers felt calmer as they ate their lunch. Towards noon a major arrived. He remained seated in his car while Garchay reported to him. Then he said:

"Congratulations. I shall let the general know. The situation is grave. Orders are to withdraw and take up positions on the Oise."

This went on for a month. Before long Leo knew all the rules of this fearful game: they retreated from one small river to another, from hill to hill, lay flat on their bellies when the Germans bombed, made their way in the darkness along country lanes and paths. And always the Germans were ahead of them. The officers tried in vain to contact headquarters. Now and again someone would arrive with orders for a new retreat, or some lost lieutenant in a frenzy of despair would shout: "Halt, scum!" to the stretcher bearers or quartermaster troops. And there was nothing to be done about it. They went on retreating from day to day and the population fled with them. For a whole month Leo saw the same road of shame, a road strewn with abandoned weapons, gas masks, suitcases and straw hats.

It was no longer individuals who were fleeing, a regiment or a city evacuating. France herself was in flight. France bereft of her reason, still breathing, infuriated and terrified, prepared to die yet still clinging desperately to her valise, her ballgown, her tennis racquet. It was impossible to recognize France in this devastated, abandoned, blazing land which resembled a vast wilderness that could not be traversed in forty years.

Now the Seine too was behind them. They turned southwest to more digging in, more bombings, more retreats. Worse even than the ruins were the peaceful homes that reminded him of his own home in Bidar, with the fragrant wistaria climbing the walls, the roses and mignonettes in the gardens and open windows revealing the simple secret of last moments—an overturned cup on a baby's high chair, a book face downward on the floor, a shaving brush with dried soap on it.

"This is my village," said the soldier walking beside Leo, and his laugh was unnaturally loud. The others glanced round at him, but no one said anything.

The village was deserted. The only sound to be heard was the agonized lowing of the cows from the barns.

The soldiers had ceased arguing or even swearing. Now and again they exchanged brief sentences such as "German tanks . . ." "Marais will never reach the village. . . Give us a fag. . . ."

Among the ruins Leo saw the blue sign of the "Orleans." He and Leontine had stayed here on their way back to Paris from Bidar. Leontine had been amazed at the old buildings. "How strange it is," she had said. "The people who lived here have been dead and forgotten for so many years yet the houses are still standing and so beautiful, much more beautiful than the new ones. . ." Later, as they sat drinking pale fragrant wine in a café overlooking the Loire, Leontine had said: "I want you as I wanted you the first evening."

Leo held his nose to shut out the nauseating stench of decomposition. It was a hot day and the ground was strewn with corpses—women, children, soldiers, horses, a fat priest and alongside a small white fluffy dog. . . .

The walls were covered with scrawled messages. "Jacques, I was here on the morning of June 6. Roget is alive!" "Lasset and his family have gone to Angoulême." "Will anyone who sees Captain Delambare please tell him that I was here with the child on Wednesday," "Pierre, I cannot wait. . ." Leo felt a lump in his throat as he read. Most likely Leontine had been here too but she had no time to write: "Leo, Robert and I are still alive." She and his son might now be lying under the ruins of this very house. And he was holding his nose to shut out the stench. . . .

"What a stink!" said his comrade. "Let's get a move on!"

And Leo unprotestingly moved on, pausing first to scrutinize the face of the woman who lay under the wall. She too perhaps had scrawled a message. . . .

In all the towns and villages they passed he eagerly scanned the walls, the white, grey, ochre walls of churches, council buildings

and schools. He saw messages signed by Jeanne, Louise, Denise, Lucy, Thérèse, Marie, Françoise. But there was no Leontine. . . .

He laughed bitterly as he realized the futility of trying to find one person among so many millions. Yet he never ceased to search.

There was a day when Leontine passed within three kilometres of the village where Leo spent the night. But they did not meet.

Lancié left Paris on Tuesday. Maurice had held out for two days. Madaud was shocked when she saw Leontine. Biting her lips, Leontine stared before her with vacant eyes. The events of the past few weeks had broken her. She picked up the newspaper a dozen times a day, trying vainly to understand what she read. Then she would dash over to the radio, but her own weeping would drown the voice of the announcer. She did not know whom to ask, who could tell her what had happened to France, to the army, to Leo. One terrifying vision haunted her day and night: a grey deserted field and Leo lying in the middle, face covered with blood, bright red blood as thick as paint. She would clutch her baby to her breast and sit for hours muttering: "Rob! Leo! Rob!"

Madaud was calm, with the calmness born of a great and irreparable grief. Nothing shocked her and she asked no questions. Of all the people she came in contact with she alone had no hope. What Sergei had said may have prepared her for the catastrophe, or perhaps it was a state of despondency that had enveloped her since the preceding autumn. Whatever it was, everything that was happening seemed quite natural to her. She was concerned with but one thing: to save her mother. Two weeks ago Marceline had had another attack. The professor had ordered complete quiet. In peacetime, of course, one could conceal financial straits or family trouble from a patient. But where could one find quiet now? The city had gone mad. The very statues seemed about to spring from their pedestals and flee to the other side of the Loire. . . .

The morning after Lancié had finally decided to leave, Dr. Morillot phoned him. "Congratulations!" he said. "Russia has declared war on Italy. . ." No one knew who had started the rumour, but it spread through the town like wildfire. Many people actually wondered whether it was really necessary to leave in that case. Lancié was triumphant. He had always said it did not pay to quarrel with the Russians. He threw down his open suitcase and dashed over to the radio. He spent an hour trying to tune in on Moscow. At last he picked up a broadcast in English. Moscow was calmly describing a visit to the agricultural exhibition.

"It's all nonsense!" Lancié shouted. "We're being deceived. Madaud, you must go for Leontine!"

Madaud went over to Leontine and said softly:

"Do you know what has happened?"

Leontine cried out: "Leo?"

"No, no, calm yourself! Nothing has happened to your husband, I give you my word, nothing! But you must get dressed at once and come with me. I had a hard time reaching you. The streets are jammed with cars. Mother is very bad but it can't be helped. We must get away! Father says the Germans have crossed the Seine. They may be in Paris tomorrow or the day after. . . ."

Leontine had taken it into her head that Leo was coming for her. How could she go away and let him come to a deserted flat? She would never be able to find him. There was no more army, no more France. . . If he was alive he would come here. And if it were true that he was lying there in the middle of the field . . . then she didn't care, let the Germans kill her and her boy. . . She must stay in Paris and wait for her husband.

Leontine realized that she was behaving foolishly and so she lied to Madaud. Calmly, very calmly she told her that the doctor was coming to see her baby in the afternoon and that afterwards she was going to Bordeaux. The neighbours were taking her, Professor Sauget. . . .

Madaud tried to persuade her, to insist that she had no right to risk her child's life. But Leontine, usually so meek and submissive, was adamant this time. And there was such an obstinate light in her large shining eyes, that Madaud ceased arguing, kissed her impulsively and left.

Leontine sat motionlessly for the rest of the day, waiting for Leo. The hubbub in the street did not abate: Paris was driving away, walking away, running away. Those who could not get any kind of conveyance went on foot. Lorries filled with children, people on bicycles, people wheeling handcarts and barrows, all tried to get ahead of one another. It was hard to say what rendered best the feeling of despair—the frantic hooting of the ambulance sirens or the children crying for their mothers. At night everything was plunged into inky darkness. People feared that even a tiny match flame might attract the attention of the enemy. Never had the city known such darkness. And the hooting, shouting and stamping did not cease for a moment. Leontine listened tensely for a footstep on the deserted stairs. Everyone had gone, but she sat there waiting for Leo.

The next morning she awoke to the realization that Leo would not come. She picked up her baby and rushed out onto the street. She ran down the long boulevard to the Orleans gates, terrified that she would be unable to get away before the Germans came. Now she felt that she only had to reach the Loire to be saved. Leo must be there. Soon her strength left her and she sank down on a chair outside an abandoned house. There were no cars to be seen. Everyone who owned one had already left town. People were walking, some carrying children on their shoulders. Presently Leontine caught sight of a small car moving through the crowd. She waved her hand. At the wheel sat a man wearing a cap. The car stopped. The man in the cap did not ask her what she wanted, there was no need. At the back sat two women and a little girl. They said something to the man in the cap and without replying he took a large valise off the seat beside him and threw it out of the car. "Jump in," he said to Leontine.

They drove for about twenty-five miles, moving very slowly in a long line of cars. Then something went wrong with the engine and they stopped until morning. The women helped Leontine with the baby. Leontine could

not quite understand what they were saying but she smiled pitifully and thanked them a thousand times for their kindness. The man in the cap said nothing.

On the third day they saw the Loire. The bridge was gone. They drove along the right bank but soon had to stop because the road was blocked by a vast number of vehicles. Somewhere farther up the road two trucks had collided, it was said. Suddenly the droning of engines sounded from the sky. The man in the cap shouted: "Run for cover!" Leontine ran over a field of potatoes and lay down. She was terrified that someone might trample her baby. The explosion was stupendous. Leontine was almost buried under the shower of earth. She thought this was the end and for a brief moment felt glad at the thought that she would no longer need to keep going, until the realization of death froze her. Her baby's cries brought her to herself. She got up and went to look for the man in the cap and the two women. But they were not there. Had they been killed or had they run away?

She waited for several hours and then started to walk. Late that night she knocked at the door of a house and asked shelter for the night. She held out some money. The man said: "There's no need," but his wife grabbed the banknote mumbling: "Isn't it awful!" She gave Leontine something to eat and took her upstairs to a room with a tall peasant bed in it. "You can rest here," she said. Leontine had not slept for two nights, and she fell asleep at once.

She was awakened by a loud noise. Through her sleep it seemed to her that someone was trying to break the door down. Springing up she saw flames through the window. She snatched up her baby and rushed out of the house. She ran down the road, blinded with smoke and half crazed with fear. Finally she sank down on a boulder by the roadside. The flames were licking the night sky that reflected their evil glow. She unbuttoned her blouse to give her baby the breast. And suddenly her agonized scream rent the air. But the villagers were too preoccupied in trying to save some of their possessions from the burning houses to heed her.

When dawn came the peasant who had put Leontine up for the night came over to her. He looked at her briefly and walked away in silence. Women came running to her, weeping and saying: "Why didn't you wrap up his head?"

Leontine clutched her dead child to her breast. Her lips moved and her dilated eyes were fixed and staring. She rocked him in her arms soundlessly repeating the lullaby her mother used to sing to her:

"Sleep my baby,
Sleep my sweet one . . .
Sleep my little chicken,
Sleep my little bird."

At noon four Germans passed by. They glanced at Leontine and turned away. She sat there all day and all night. The next morning a German soldier with a red cross band on his arm came up to her. He wanted to take the child from her but she resisted. He called over some of his comrades and one of them who spoke French said to Leontine:

"Madame, he must be buried."

They brought a priest, a German in army uniform. He took a lace surplice and a prayer book from his dispatch case and muttered something. The day was too hot for much exertion and so the soldiers dug a tiny grave as if they were planting a flower. They had to hold Leontine down for she fought fiercely for the body of her son. The German who spoke French tried to console her.

"Do not take on so, Madame," he said. "You are still young. You will have many more children."

The officer studied her papers for a long time, then told one of the soldiers to take her to the assembly point. "She's from Paris," he said.

Leontine was taken to a small copse where several hundred people, mainly women with children and old folks were gathered. Leontine did not weep. She was indifferent to everything. Even the cries of the children did not penetrate her daze. An old woman gave her a piece of bread and chocolate. Leontine thanked her.

The women with children were taken on lorries. The rest had to walk. After walking a couple of miles on the dusty road Leontine fell. She was lifted and carried to a lorry. When they reached Paris she walked home. The door to the flat was open. "Why, I didn't lock it when I left," Leontine thought. The rooms were in fearful disorder: someone had evidently been going through the cupboards. Her frocks, Leo's suits, ties, a bathing suit lay scattered on the floor. A forlorn baby's diaper finally unloosed the torrent of her grief, and she wept. And far into the night bawdy German voices sang:

"Valerie—Valera
Tirari—Tarara!"

(Spring 1941)

Corporal Keller was well known in the bistros of Dijon. He spoke French fluently, without confusing the "b" and "p" sounds as most Germans did, and could even distinguish old Burgundy from the bad wine that appeared to satisfy his comrades. Keller was notorious also for having stolen the heart of Mimi, the modiste, who frankly declared that she would not exchange her German for anyone. The regiment had been stationed in the town since the previous summer and Keller considered himself quite an old-timer.

Had anyone told him three years ago that he would become a soldier, a frequenter of bistros and the lover of a French girl he would never have believed it. Formerly when he had thought about war it had struck him as a cruel and senseless business. In his student years he had read several sensational novels on the subject, and had realized that man cannot exist in a world bent on destruction; he had assumed that this simple truth was accepted by everyone and when he had heard people saying that war was imminent he had refused

to believe it, passing it off as idle chatter or part of the diplomatic game.

Before he knew where he was he found himself in Belgium. He quaked inwardly at the thought of the coming battles but he was ashamed of his fear and before the others he put up a bold front: "Call this war!" he would say contemptuously. But the distant rumble of the heavy artillery gave him a sensation of nausea. His regiment did not take part in initial operations; it moved up after the front had been broken through. The officers talked about touring the wine cellars of Champagne. Near Epernay, however, they unexpectedly encountered resistance: some fifty French entrenched in a copse gave battle. The truck on which Keller was riding was fired at, two of his comrades were killed and four seriously wounded. Keller was petrified with terror and instead of lying down he stood up and for some reason began to wipe his glasses. A command from the officer brought him to himself with a start and he dropped down quickly beside the others and began firing. An hour later they had taken possession of the copse. When Keller saw a dozen French with upraised hands, a sensation of joy flooded him at the realization that he was alive. After his narrow escape from death life seemed so much sweeter than before. That evening, contrary to his custom, he got drunk in a cool cellar that smelt of wine and spent the night with a girl. When he thought of Gerta the next morning he felt no remorse. This was war, by day you risked your life and at night you amused yourself. . . .

The war was soon over but the amusements remained, along with the newly acquired self confidence. When Keller came home that winter on leave Gerta did not recognize him. Thirty-two days in the army had actually made a man of Johann! He spoke very loudly and drank kirsch, and when she said they ought to pay a visit to the dean, he told her curtly to mind her own business! She was hurt, but at the same time felt a thrill of pleasure: the new Johann pleased her far more than the old. At night when he kissed her and teased her she thought of the attractive French girls from the *Folies-Bergères* and sighed. Of course, Johann must be deceiving her, but it would be foolish to reproach him. This was war. . . .

She asked her husband whether war was terrifying.

"Yes," he said, "it is. But thrilling too... Evidently there must be a good deal of the child in grown men, and war is a game, brutal but exciting."

He realized that he had no more than a book knowledge of many things. True, he had not taken part in any real fighting; nevertheless he had seen action, his company had lost six men. He had every right to speak of the war as a regular soldier. No doubt fear was something everyone experienced but it was like the drops one took to sharpen the appetite or like a sleeping draught before retiring, it gave one a taste for life. Sitting at home in his bedroom slippers waiting for the Gestapo to come for him had been far worse. . . .

There was something about war that was akin to human nature. Writers did not understand this, they limited themselves to preaching humanity and shedding crocodile tears. But Hitler had understood! He had united Germany and not by ideas but by something stronger; he had awakened the instinct of power, he had led them into battle and now they were all in it. Was he a Nazi, he asked himself. He saw how they had distorted anthropology. . . Nevertheless he was now heart and soul for Hitler. We've got to take London, he told himself, otherwise we'll all have to pay for Paris. . . When he returned to Dijon Mimi seemed to him more bewitching than ever.

"Do you know why I love you?" she said to him. "It is because you are an animal. Yes, yes, don't argue, I mean it. An animal! You may be a professor, but I assure you that you are really an animal. The French talk a lot about love, but they never lose their heads. They are always laughing. But you have only to take off your glasses to become a bull. . . ."

He could not understand this queer girl. Suddenly she would burst into tears and start to shower herself with abuse; she assured him that she was very happy and yet at the tenderest moments would whisper: "Bull! You damned bull!" Looking into her eyes, at once tender and depraved, he would think: "How lovely she is and how shameless!"

He did not neglect his family. Regularly he sent parcels of chocolate, sausage and soap and every other day he wrote Gerta, dutifully ending each letter with "a thousand kisses."

He liked France, its vine-clad hills, the Gothic of its churches, the narrow, winding streets with the stone steps, the shuttered windows, the women in black, the musical language, the pithy expressions, the sparkling eyes. He felt like a tourist relieved of the distasteful necessity of pulling out his wallet at every step. Knowledge of the language made life easy for him; he made a point of showing how well he knew France and how much he liked that country. Whenever he detected a note of unfriendliness in tone or expression he would say amiably: "Do not be angry with me. I am not here of my own free will. War is a terrible thing!" This did not happen often and Keller believed that although they were constrained by the presence of a foreign garrison, the French bore no ill-will toward the Germans.

He had not seen Mimi for two weeks and was hurt and irritated by her absence. When finally she came he noticed bruises on her body.

"What does this mean?" he demanded.

"I fell."

"You're telling lies, and stupid ones too. . . ."

"Don't bother me, it's none of your business. . . ."

He realized that it would be absurd on his part to make a scene of jealousy. Moreover, he was in a good humour. He felt an urge to talk, to think aloud. Mimi, of course, was not the ideal listener. But she was there beside him while his friends were either sleeping or drinking or like himself amusing themselves with girls.

"I have grown quite fond of you, Mimi," he told her. "Queer that I should feel this way about a French girl. This war has brought us all much closer together. You know, there

are some fine fellows in my company. Before the war they knew nothing whatever about France and now they say: 'These are good people and they know how to live.' Of course, there are plenty of misunderstandings. After all we are uninvited guests, so to speak. But, in my opinion, the French too have come to understand us and even got to like us. You come in contact with people, tell me, what do they say about us?"

Mimi burst out laughing.

"They gave me such a beating I could scarcely drag myself home."

"Who?"

"Who? Why, the French, of course. 'Got to like us!'"

"I . . . I don't understand? What did they beat you for?"

"For being a skunk, that's why. I admit it. I love you, but I know it is disgusting of me. When you clear out of here they'll kill me, you may rest assured. . . ."

In vain did he try to discover who had molested her. Mimi was silent. "They are a treacherous lot, all the same," he reflected as he walked home. "They smile at you and behind your back. . . Gerta was right, I am far too gullible. . . ."

He dropped into a café and drank a large glass of cognac at the bar. He felt extremely depressed, and being a well-balanced man he could not stand those rare attacks of mental stress. He felt a need to talk, to declare his love for France, to unmask hidden enemies. Unfortunately, the café was deserted but for one old man, poorly but neatly dressed with a ribbon in his buttonhole—a retired teacher perhaps, or an impoverished bourgeois. Keller attempted to start a conversation with the buxom, sleepy proprietress:

"A fine evening, Madame, real spring weather."

"It is not surprising, sir, May is nearly over. . . ."

"Perhaps you wish to close and I am detaining you?"

"No, sir, we have still an hour to go."

She left him and went into a back room. The old man's face wore a friendly smile. Keller walked over to him and asked politely: "May I sit here?"

The old man did not reply. Keller got furious. His behaviour from that moment was conditioned by his talk with Mimi and the cognac. He sat astride the chair, with his legs wide apart and said:

"So you won't speak, eh?"

The old man still smiled and said nothing.

"It's time you dropped this business!" Keller cried. "I'll force you to speak."

"And you can wipe that smile off your face! Perhaps you are remembering Verdun? Bah, ancient history! I saw your generals surrender. . . You think you can get the better of me by your silence? You swine!"

The proprietress came running in.

"You are wasting your breath, sir!" she exclaimed. "Monsieur Champillot is a deafmute. Everyone knows him. One of your officers is billeted in his house. . . ."

Keller swore and strode out, slamming the door behind him. The devil take the lot of them. They all pretend to be deafmutes! That night he couldn't sleep. His head throbbed, and the vision of the rosy-cheeked old man with the disgusting smile, and the bruises on Mimi's back kept dancing before his eyes. Disgusting! Everything was disgusting, the French, the war, and himself—a fine scientist, making scenes in cafés!

A week later Keller learned that his regiment was being sent back to Germany. He was happy at the prospect of seeing Gerta and the children. But the thought that the war was over for him marred his pleasure. He did not relish a return to dull, civilian life, to Gerta's incessant chatter about coupons, and to Klietsche's intrigues. Within a year everyone would have forgotten that he had ever been in the army, and people would jeer at his stories. But it couldn't be helped. That was life.

It made him sad to part with Mimi. For him she personified France, sinful but enchanting. He had expected her to weep and beg him to take her with him. But when she heard that he was leaving, Mimi said calmly:

"They'll probably send you to Egypt or somewhere else. I am sure you will all be killed. . . I am sorry for you; that's because I am a fool. But I'm not sorry for the others, or for myself either. They're sure to kill me, and I deserve it. . . ."

Keller was crushed by this leave-taking. But fate had a consolation in store for him in the shape of a three-day furlough in Paris. He had long dreamed of revisiting the city which had so enchanted him before the war. At that time he had felt bound both by Gerta's fussiness and the unfriendliness of the French. And then there was Dr. König at the embassy. Now he walked the streets of Paris, alone and free, unburdened either by fear or his former sense of inferiority. And although Paris had lost its sparkle and glow, Keller thought it delightful.

He decided to pay a visit to Professor Dumas. True, in the past year he had been out of touch with science, but the professor would surely understand that war is not exactly the time and place for study. . . It would be nice to meet the old chap again. No doubt Dumas too would be flattered at this token of respect from a German scientist. . . .

It was not until he had rung the bell that it occurred to him that Dumas might not want to talk to him. After all, some of them were quite implacable. . . .

The door was opened by Marie. Failing to recognize in the German soldier the guest who had once treated her culinary gifts with such indifference, she ran back to the professor crying:

"Germans!"

Dumas drew himself up and said calmly:

"Very well, let them search the place. Perhaps they have come for me?"

He buttoned his jacket and went out to the hallway:

"If it's me you've come for, I shall not detain you," he said gruffly.

"Monsieur le Professeur, do you not recognize me? Johann Keller is my name. Before the war you did me the great honour. . . ."

"Ah, yes, I remember now, come in. There is so much camouflage nowadays that you never know where you are. . . Sit down please, everything is filthy anyway. . . I'm

afraid I have nothing to offer you, your compatriots have lapped up everything. Wait, I think there is a drop here at the bottom, but it is very good stuff. Old Calvados. Well, what are you working on now?"

"I had to give up my work more than a year ago."

"So now you're taking cities! A disgusting occupation! You'll take them first, then they'll be taken away from you, and by then there'll be very little left of the towns. And of you too for that matter. . . I remember one of your professors complaining of overpopulation. Take care yours doesn't find itself reduced. . . Forgive me, please, for jumping on you like this. I live alone. . . I realize that you are not a party to all this abomination."

"As before, Monsieur le Professeur, I avoid politics."

"I avoided them too. But, you know, they have forced themselves on me. . . Drink the Calvados, it is a rarity nowadays. I am sorry you are wearing that disgusting garb, it is painful to see a decent man, a promising young scientist too, in such a get-up. Don't they allow you to wear civilian clothes off duty?"

"But, Monsieur le Professeur, why must you take such a harsh view of things? I thought that our peoples had come closer together in these hard times, that we had come to understand one another better. . . ."

"What did you say? Come closer together?" Dumas sprang up and burst out laughing. "Marie, come here! Look at this gentleman, he says that we and the Germans have come closer together! You mean to say that if a bandit knocks a man down and stuffs a gag into his mouth he is closer to him?"

Keller had been controlling himself all this time, reminding himself that he was in the presence of a famous scientist, but now he could restrain himself no longer.

"I thought that events had taught the French something . . . at least modesty. . . ."

Dumas turned red.

"Get out!" he cried. "Go and bring your Gestapo men. And don't come here pretending to be my guest! Marie, show him out! And quickly, too!"

Keller walked out in grim silence.

Marie wept. "What have you done, Monsieur Dumas! Now they are sure to come and take you away. . . ."

He took her roughened hand in his.

"Eh, Marie!" he said gently. "We must know how to live—to be gay, to sing, dance, drink if there is something to drink. . . But we must know how to die too, like human beings. When you shoot a rabbit it weeps like a baby. But when you cut down a tree it falls to the ground in silence. . . Death is nothing to be afraid of, it can be a noble thing if you are a man and not a clod. . . Like that German. . . .

"Open the window and let us clear the air of his presence. . . ."

That was how Keller's last hours in France were spoiled. He caught up with his unit in Aachen. There he learned that they were being transferred to Rumania. The soldiers were speculating as to where the new war would be.

"They say it'll be Russia this time," said the feldwebel. "The Russians don't like us."

Keller laughed mirthlessly.

"It's the same everywhere nowadays. You think they like us in France? They are only waiting for a chance to pounce on us. . . There's one scoundrel, I'm sorry I didn't report to the Kommandantur. I didn't want to soil my hands. We Germans are far too trusting, yes, and too high-minded. . . ."

(June 21, 1941)

"Ought to try and have a nap for an hour or two," said feldwebel Grün, nicknamed the Cockroach because of the comical way his long whiskers stuck out.

Presently he rose, yawning and cursing: "It's no use trying to sleep. . . ."

No one could sleep that night. For ten days they had been stationed in this village tormented by the heat, the mosquitoes, and the suspense. Now this strain was at an end.

A young soldier with a chubby face and very light eyes that wore a permanent expression of astonishment, emitted a string of filthy words and spat, or rather went through the motions of spitting, for his mouth was parched. It was Klepper, the son of a landlord in Hamburg. Klepper was very scared, but he longed to be brave, to prove to Lotta that he was a man and not a milksop! But fear lurked somewhere in the pit of his stomach.

"Paul says that when they finished off everybody in Niederstein," he said, thinking aloud, "there was one Communist, a left-handed guy, Paul says you could have laid him out with one finger. But they couldn't catch him. And then there was hell to pay, because he sliced up Stramer with a razor. When they surrounded the house where he was hiding he killed two storm troopers—the damned left-handed fellow, and kept the rest of them sweating all night long. If there are many Communists in Russia there'll be hell to pay. . . ."

"Nonsense, my lad," admonished Cockroach. "That left-handed hero of yours was a German but these are Russians. I saw a Russian once. He didn't even know how to blow his nose. They might have been able to fight in the days of scythes and pitchforks, but when we come along with our new toys they won't know what hit them. . . ."

Cockroach had been to Poland and France and he treated these greenhorns with condescension.

"This isn't an election. Communist or no communist, my lad, we'll scare the pants off 'em. It's too bad we aren't tankists, though. We're always late. My kid brother is a tankist. Those bastards get all the cream. By the time we arrive, the best wine is gone and the youngest and prettiest girls are spoiled."

Klepper forced a laugh. It would be good, he thought, to have a picture taken with some girl and send it to Lotta. That would show her he was a real guy! But his fear kept stirring within him.

"Ever been in any nasty engagements?"

he asked Cockroach with studied carelessness.

"Never been out of them! When we got to Saumur our tanks were still in La Rochelle and out of a clear sky they came down on us. The French, you think? No such luck, these were blacks, Senegalese and they came at us like mad. Kept it up till dark, too. Those Senegalese can be pretty fierce, of course, but they die the same as the rest. The Russians can blacken their faces if they like but when they see us coming they'll be goners before they have time to turn pale. . . ."

A corporal with an iron cross on his chest supported Cockroach.

"When they had tsars and German generals," he said, "they were able to defend themselves. Now all they can do is argue. Russia's a giant with feet of clay. . . ."

"They say the roads there are terrible. . . ."

"If we got across Poland we can get through anywhere."

But Klepper could not rest.

"But why the hell should they have wanted to attack us? That means they've got a big army. . . ."

"Of course, they've got a big army! Russia's not Luxembourg or Lichtenstein, it's a big country. We'll have to build big camps for war prisoners. . . ."

Bauer, a forty-year-old non-commissioned officer, who had been a drawing teacher before the war, frowned. How disgusting, he thought. Why were they sticking their noses into Russia? Did they want to make Nazis of the Russians too? Wasn't it enough that they had forced all of Germany to march at the orders of these snot noses! Look at what they had done to him. He would never have believed he could fall so low as to steal chickens from Poles. . . Exactly ten years ago he had made arrangements to visit Moscow. He had gone with his friend Fritz to the Intourist office on Unter den Linden. And then Klemper had invited him to Heringsdorf and he had changed his plans. What was he doing here now? What had the Russians done to him? Nothing! But the Nazis had made a scoundrel of him. "I must have infected that girl in Kelci. Janina was her name. . . Horrible! And these idiots are glad. . . ."

Klepper decided to write a letter to Lotta. He wrote with a flourish, trying to avoid being sentimental. Girls like fellows to be tough. And it wouldn't do to let her know his feelings for her; girls fell for the lady killer type. "The last dreadful night of waiting," he wrote. Then he carefully erased the word "dreadful" and wrote "fatal." "There are lots of beautiful girls in Poland. The other fellows gave them the glad eye. But my thoughts were far away, in the East where the sun rises and where for me perhaps it will set forever! Zero hour is about to strike. Remember how we strolled arm in arm in Oberwalde? I shall do what I promised you then. Think of me smiling to you as I plunge into battle." His letter finished, he pulled out the notebook Lotta had given him and wrote: "June 21. Night. Orders to go into action. No sleep. Preparations. Horror." He tried to console himself with chocolate, but as soon as he bit off a piece the nausea rose to his throat.

Richter took no part in the conversation. He was thinking of Hilda. She must be sleeping at this moment. But suppose she wasn't? Suppose Robert was with her? At the station he had stood beside Hilda. Robert had remained behind in Berlin. He had come to her at nine. She had made him wait for half an hour in the drawing room. While he idly turned the pages of *German Gothic* and yawned nervously, she had been dressing; she had put on a kimona, the blue one with the storks embroidered on it, she had dabbed perfume on her breast and throat and had gone out to him. She had looked at Robert with sad round eyes: "My friend, you are here?" As though she hadn't known he was waiting for her! Then she had cried: "Robert, what are you doing?" At this very moment she must be saying: "Suppose Kurt should find out? I wouldn't want to hurt him. . ." and Robert would sympathize: "Poor Kurt!" No, that couldn't be. Why do I torture myself with these crazy fancies? On this of all nights! I must forget! And Richter forced himself to listen to the talk going on around him.

"They sent Napoleon packing," the corporal was saying, "that's true all right, but those were the days of horses and carts. This is the machine age, nowadays distances can't frighten anyone. . . ."

What do they know about Russia, Richter thought bitterly. Russia wasn't a country, it was a world in itself. You could travel for days and there was no end to the forests and the steppes. It gave a man a frightening sense of his own insignificance. Even without a war you could get lost in the wide open spaces and die all alone and no one would be any the wiser. Of course, the Russians haven't got our organization. They are a strange people, you can never rely on them. You talk to them and you never know what they may do the next minute. . . They may meet us with flowers, I shouldn't be surprised if they did. Or they may fight like the devil. I was there twice but can I say that I know them? Colonel Vilke doesn't know them either, otherwise he wouldn't talk about "semi-peaceful penetration." One can understand the French, the Dutch, the English, but not these Asiatics. . . Even the Führer most likely did not suspect what a hard nut he had undertaken to crack. . . .

"Of course there are a lot of them," said Cockroach. "But there are even more Chinese. War isn't arithmetics. . . I saw a French general surrender, he had eighteen ribbons on his chest. No snot nose. But he bawled like a baby when he realized that compared with the Germans he was a snot nose. There may be more Russians than ants but that won't make a particle of difference. Let me tell you, my lad, you can't fight our toys with pitchforks. They say the Cossacks have some damn fine horses. I'd like to see them when our tanks come on the scene!"

Fool, thought Richter, he thinks the Russians have no tanks. What is Kuznetsk for? I'm afraid we are underestimating our opponent. But I'd better not say anything or they'll claim that I'm trying to sow panic. And there isn't any sense frightening them. Once we have started this business we've got to go through with it. The sooner we win the sooner

it will be over. God, I hope it will be over soon. Hilda said: "I will wait a year, two years." But how can one fathom the mysteries of a woman's heart? We ought to win, we have organization and dynamic drive. That Cockroach there won't stop at anything, he'll keep on going because he does not think, you can kill him, but you can't put any new ideas into his head. That's what makes us strong. Undoubtedly, we will win, but not all of us will return from Russia. Of course, the Führer had taken everything into account. Poland, France, Norway, Thermopylae—that man certainly knows how to fight! It will be too bad, though, if we don't get the better of them before the winter sets in. The Russian winter is hell. I wasn't there in winter, yet I shuddered whenever they told me what winters are like there. . . .

"Want a tot of rum, Richter? It's Jamaica stuff, from Bordeaux. . . ."

Richter tossed off half a glass.

"It smells all right, but it gives you a nasty head. Russian vodka's the thing. It stinks, but it's a marvellous concoction. You can drink two full glasses like this and the next morning you'll be as fresh as a daisy."

"I drank vodka once in a Russian restaurant on Motzstrasse."

Richter laughed.

"Everything in its own place. I drank vodka in Siberia."

He seemed to have grown in stature at that moment. The others stared at him with new respect. Even the veterans of the French campaign were impressed. Everyone knew France. But Richter here had seen that mysterious Russia with his own eyes!

"Do you think they'll put up a fight?" Klepper asked.

"I don't know. The more you observe those people the less you seem to know them. They are a people without spiritual organization. When they drink vodka they grimace, swear and snort as if they were being forced to swallow quinine. But I saw Russian girls laying bricks. It was a terrible sight . . . the blood dripped from their fingers, their nails were torn, yet those girls smiled and looked as gay as if they were at a wedding. No, you can study them till you're blue in the face, but you'll never understand the Russians anyway. Of course, they haven't got our organization, and we'll make short work of them, that's quite clear. But why should we try to guess whether they'll put up a fight or not. That's their private affair, in either case we'll be in Moscow, and I give you my word, I'm looking forward to eating a whole pound of caviare."

"Do you spread it on bread?" Cockroach asked.

"In Berlin you spread it on bread, but in Moscow they eat it with spoons."

"You're pulling my leg. I know you spread it on bread like butter."

"You'll soon see for yourself. I'll eat caviare with a spoon. . . ."

"What kind of dames have they got? Anything like the Polacks?"

"All sorts. Not a bad choice at all."

Cockroach wiggled his moustache.

"I'll kiss my first Moscow girl on my birthday."

"When's that?" asked Klepper.

"August 8th."

Klepper figured rapidly—forty-seven days! Christ!

"Are you sure the business will be over by August 8th?" the corporal put in.

"Absolutely. I don't know whether you eat caviare with a spoon or not, but I do know that we'll be in Moscow on August 8th. I'll wager you the first pretty Moscow girl that comes along. Figure it out for yourself: 30 kilometres a day, at a low estimate, about 10 days for regrouping and bringing up the rear. I know the whole schedule!"

"The bastards will soon get what's coming to them for trying to stab us in the back!" Klepper said vehemently, but terror looked out of his naive eyes. "They'll get a damn sight more than they bargained for! Don't worry, when I get to Moscow I'm not going to waste time making eyes at the girls."

The brief night was on the wane. A roseate flush slowly spread over the summer sky, waking it from its fitful slumbers. Over there, beyond that river is war, thought Richter. How many books have been written about war, and yet it is still incomprehensible! It's the same with love—they write and write and then some Hilda comes along, the daughter of a respectable businessman, she speaks English, plays the piano, as refined a young lady as you please, and then the whole thing becomes a horrible game, as if you were driving in a burning tank. . . Beyond the river there are the same dreary fields, the same clucking of hens, the same women carrying pails of water, the same tow-headed brats gaping at the guns. . . In forty minutes from now it will start. . . Richter wanted to feel that this was a historical moment, that he was taking part in an epoch-making event of which his descendants would read with pride in years to come. But his thoughts wandered. He saw before him now Hilda's untidy bedroom, now boundless green spaces. His head whirled.

"That rum is poison!"

"I put down a whole glass of it and I feel dandy!" boasted Klepper. "It's regular soldier's swill. In Moscow I'll try that famous vodka of yours. But first we'll give those Russians a good thrashing!"

"Shut up, lad, this is war, not a game of skittles!" Cockroach looked grimmer. He was thinking of another snot nose like Klepper he had seen lying stiff and dead near Beauvais.

The others were exchanging loud boisterous comments about girls, Moscow. Some were just shouting lustily with relief that dawn was approaching and with it the end of the nerve-wracking suspense.

Against the dawn-filled sky the green rocket looked pallid and rather sad. Richter was reminded of Hilda's eyes and he scowled. The village roosters were calling to one another. Cockroach rapped out the order to start.

Natasha had been working in Minsk since the previous winter. Hence it was no wonder Natasha's family were frankly incredulous when she suddenly announced that she was being sent to Minsk for the summer. "A sheer coincidence," she maintained. But the more she protested the more obvious it was to everyone that she was fibbing. All this talk about airplanes which were to spray insecticide on orchards was so much eyewash, Dmitri Alexeyevich was convinced. Everyone knew that Minsk had forests, sawmills, matches, anything but apples! Although the idea of spraying from airplanes had rather intrigued him at first, Dmitri Alexeyevich finally protested.

"Now then, Natasha, what do you mean by pulling your old dad's leg? Here I go taking it all in like the old fool I am. I told you long ago, I like him. You like him too, you told me so yourself. So stop trying to throw dust into our eyes. A girl of twenty-one ought to know her own mind. . . ."

Natasha laughed. Vassya wouldn't believe her either. He would think she just couldn't live without him. That would be a pity, of course. But suppose it happened to be true, why should she pretend to be cold and indifferent? Let him think what he liked. At any rate, she would see him. You couldn't get a word out of him, and she simply must know where she stood. It had to be yes or no. The funniest thing was that it was all true; she really was being sent to Minsk. As for spraying orchards from the air, Father hadn't understood properly, or rather she hadn't explained it properly. There were other things to be done in Minsk. But the important thing was that it was Minsk. It was marvellous luck, really. There had been four places to choose from; but Minsk might easily not have been one of them. . . .

"Look at her, all starry-eyed!" teased her father. "Anyone would think you were going off to Naples! My dear girl, that face of yours gives you away completely. You ought to try to hide your feelings just for the sake of decency. At least when you're trying to pull the wool over your dad's eyes. . . ."

June was verdant and sunny. Vassya himself realized that it was time he and Natasha came to some understanding. She hadn't come to Minsk for nothing. It would be simpler here without parents, without Dmitri Alexeyevich to ask embarrassing questions. They'd write the folks a letter afterwards, and that would be enough. But how was he to tell Natasha how he felt about her? Sergei would know, Vassya thought with envy, he's a good talker. . . For two days he thought it over and decided that he would not make any speeches. If he began talking about love Natasha was liable to laugh at him. It was only in books that you talked about love. "I hear the flutter of wings," Dmitri Alexeyevich had liked that. But if you were to say it, it would sound silly. . . No doubt Mayakovsky would have put it differently. The best thing would be to say: "Let's live together." No, that was crude. Or else: "Would you like to stay with me forever?" Too theatrical that "forever."

Finally, he gave up trying to think about it. As a matter of fact, it all happened without words. Looking into Natasha's laughing eyes Vassya said: "You're a little devil. . ." And she had blushed and retired to a corner of the room, and he had pulled her out and suddenly she was in his arms, and he was kissing her. Then they went a little mad, and whirled round the room, laughing gaily. He swept her off her feet and held her in his arms. "Why, you're as light as a feather," he said. "Just you wait. What if you find I am as hard as nails?" Whereupon they both burst out laughing at the absurdity of the idea. After a while they were silent, frightened a little at the fullness of their happiness. "So this is what it is like!" Natasha was thinking. "Why, I never imagined it would be so marvellous. One could go completely crazy, one could even start writing poetry. . ." Vassya remembered Natasha's embarrassment when she first arrived and he laughed aloud. "Spraying from the air, remember?" But Natasha stopped him with a kiss. Night veiled their happiness.

They were to spend the Sunday together and the dawn of the new day seemed to them a continuation of the magic night. They were a little shy of one another, and kept saying: "Why are you looking at me?" And then forgetting everything they would kiss again. Natasha got up and put on the kettle. "I'll buy you some jam," she said. "I know how you love it. You think I didn't notice the way you used to dig into the jam pot at home. . . ."

He took her out to show her "his" houses. It was a sunny day with a high wind. Vassya's tie flapped about absurdly and Natasha had a hard time holding her skirts down.

"What a wind!"

"But it's nice and cool, isn't it. We'll go to the woods later on, shall we?"

He spoke to her about the new buildings.

"I don't think much of all this ornamental stuff," he said, "But it can't be helped, the material is so bad we have to hide it somehow. . . In two or three years we'll have decent material to build with and then we can afford to concentrate on lines."

Natasha frowned, then smiled as she thought of something.

"I don't know much about all this now, Vassya. But you wait, in two or three years I will. By the time you'll be getting decent material to build with you'll have a decent wife too."

They went on in silence, savouring their happiness to the full. Suddenly someone caught Vassya's arm from behind. He turned round. It was Lapitsky.

"Molotov is going to speak over the air in a few minutes. The Germans have already announced it. . . ."

Vassya's thoughts were far away.

"What is it, a treaty?" he asked.

From an open window they heard the voice of Molotov. Afterwards music played. But Natasha and Vassya still stood there rooted to the spot.

The world hummed like a giant beehive disturbed. Dmitri Alexeyevich, flushed with rage, kept repeating: "Barbarians! What barbarians!" The fighting had already started in Poland and Lithuania. Richter was covering his gun with birch branches that had a bitter fragrance. In Berlin people were singing, shouting and waiting for news

of victories. Up in the north Osip was making a speech: "The treacherous fascists have perfidiously. . ." And in Paris, Sembat threw aside his brushes: "Well, they're done for now. . . They'll never be able to get out of Russia!" Motorcycles sputtered. Frontier towns blazed. A wounded child cried for her mother. At the Moscow radio station someone yelled: "What are we going to do about the programs? We've nothing ready. . . Put on some songs!" And so music poured over the stunned cities, peacetime songs about nightingales and cherry trees. The guns were already thundering and the din of battle rose hourly. And little Natasha, whose face betrayed her every emotion, little Natasha who had only just learned what makes life worth living, stood there and felt her world crashing about her ears.

There was a clamour of voices all round them.

"The scoundrels!"

"I knew that would happen."

"You always say that. . . ."

"Without the slightest warning!"

"Bastards!"

"And what are the German Communists doing?"

"Here's their chance to act. . . ."

"Wasn't it wonderful the way he said: 'victory will be ours.'"

"This isn't France!"

"I'm afraid their airplanes will be here soon. . . ."

"Do you think it will be a long war?"

"Not with modern methods of warfare. . . ."

"I suppose our troops have already crossed the frontier. . . ."

"Mishenka, darling, you'll be called up!"

"Hush, Mother, everyone is staring at us. . . ."

"I'm afraid they'll be raiding Minsk soon. . . ."

"Don't worry, they'll never get this far. . . ."

"Don't they realize that our resources are inexhaustible?"

"We live in the worst possible place, right near the power station. . . ."

"I'm off to the military commissariat. . . ."

"Ugh, what a calamity!"

Vassya went straight to the building site, Natasha to the university settlement. As they parted, she said:

"How queer . . . that it should have come today. . . ."

"Natasha, darling, whatever happens, we are bound forever. . . ."

That night Natasha was on the roof, fire-watching. The city looked like a dark forest. She shuddered, frightened by the darkness. The next day was full of air-raid warnings: enemy scout planes were flying over. Natasha thought it a rather amusing game, she was sure the fascists were being stopped. And the radio voice announcing the "all clear" sounded so gay, and reassuring.

That evening, finding that she would be free for an hour, Natasha ran over to see Vassya. She found him looking grave and anxious.

"They told me to wait when I went to the commissariat to volunteer. But how can I wait? I saw refugees from Western Belorussia. . . Those swine took us by surprise. But in a few days everything will change. We'll bring up our forces. It's a damned shame I'm in the artillery. The anti-tank service is the most important now!"

Natasha had to hurry back. She said good-bye and walked away, then returned.

"I forgot to tell you . . . I must go, they're waiting for me. . . I'll try to come over tomorrow. . . Vassya, just in case we don't see each other again, remember, you've got a wife now. . . ."

She kissed him, not embarrassed by the presence of strangers.

Good news was waiting for her when she returned to her fire-watching duty on the roof. Four German planes had been shot down. That night she no longer felt scared. The rattle of the ack-ack guns thrilled her. The Germans would soon see how strong we were! She felt proud to think she was a soldier taking part in the fighting.

On Tuesday morning she saw a great many planes approaching. The sun shone on their wings and they looked beautiful against the clear blue sky. There was no air raid alarm and Natasha remarked to the student with her:

"Look, those must be our fighter planes!"

Suddenly the world rocked. There was a deafening explosion, followed by a second and a third. . . The student fell flat on his face. Natasha did not realize what was happening and she stood looking up at the sky. Another explosion shook the earth! She covered her face with her hands as though to shut out the sight. When she next looked everything around her was enveloped in black smoke. A large building nearby was in flames. The sight of the fire filled her with fear. Then fury choked her: the swine, murdering peaceful townspeople. And there was so little she could do to help!

Now the apartment houses near the factories were burning. Vassya was there! Natasha no longer felt frightened, she felt nothing but anger: her temples throbbed with rage and her breath came in gasps. If only they would be shot down. And when one of the German bombers caught fire she found herself shouting frenziedly: "It's coming down. It's coming down!" But the other planes continued to bomb the city.

"Incendiaries!"

Natasha did what was required of her without being aware of it. But she must have done well, for she found the student congratulating her and shaking her by the hand. Again she heard a deafening roar as if an express train were coming straight at her. She dropped down but there was no explosion. At last the planes went.

Natasha ran over to the factory buildings. Bits of broken glass scrunched underfoot. Weeping women hurried along carrying children and bundles. The roads were a mass of bomb craters and rubble. Some houses were burning. She did not find Vassya. He had gone to the city committee of the Party, she was told. Lipetsky assured her he had seen him after the All Clear. "There are quite a few casualties," he said.

Returning to the university settlement Natasha saw an unexploded bomb near the physics building. That must have been the one she had heard. If it had gone off she might

there. Even lying there now, and there would be no Vassya, no Vassya, nothing! The unthinkable was awful to contemplate. A car drove up to the medical institute and presently they began to carry out the corpses: a woman of about forty; a man in a white embroidered shirt; a little girl, like a broken doll, with her legs torn off, and her face as calm as though she were not dead but asleep; an old Jew; a pregnant woman. Natasha had never seen a corpse before and her first impulse was to turn away, but she forced herself to look. Perhaps tomorrow or a week from now they would be carrying her out like that... There was nothing to be afraid of, these people would never know fear nor pain any more. It was the relatives who were to be pitied... If only Vassya was not killed, that was the main thing... How beautiful that little girl had been!

The corpses were covered with a cloth, and presently an old woman was carried out on a stretcher, she had been hurt and she was crying and wringing her hands with pain. The stretcher left a trail of blood in its wake in the sand. It seemed incongruous in these peaceful surroundings; the little garden, the fountain, the green bench with the inscriptions carved on its back: "Varya," "7.5.1941," "Passed!" "Don't believe Masha!"

That evening they heard that the power station had been wrecked. The Komarov woods had caught fire and the air became suffocatingly hot. All night long Natasha stared at the fire and thought of Vassya. The next morning he came.

"My houses!" he said. "Nothing left but a heap of debris. Never mind, we'll build new ones... The awful thing is that the military commissariat keeps telling me to wait. I'm worried about you, though. You must leave Minsk at once...."

"But what about you?"

"I am in the reserve I may be sent off any minute. But you must go away. They have the advantage of us at this stage. Within a few weeks the tables will be turned, but now the situation is critical...."

"How can I leave without you?"

"Natasha, we are not the only couple to be separated now. And you must do as I say, I understand these things better than you. You will be taken as far as Borisov by car, and from there you can get a train to Moscow... They'll be leaving very soon. You will have to hurry...."

It was all so sudden that Natasha had no time to realize that she was being torn away from Vassya. She stood on a truck with the other women craning her neck to catch another glimpse of Vassya. He was trying hard to smile. Perhaps she would never see him again! Her heart froze at the thought. They were driving past burning houses. The women clutched their children close and wept from horror and from the smoke. One thought possessed them all: would they get out in time?

The highway was jammed with trucks, carts and people. The exodus had begun. Old women plodded along weighed down under heavy bundles; one woman carried a sewing machine; an elderly man hauling a large bundle of books kept sinking down on the hot dusty road and saying: "Thirty years' work, thirty years' work..." A woman who had lost her child ran up to everyone asking: "Have you seen a little girl in a pink dress?" Natasha's truck moved very slowly: now and again clouds of dust blotted out everything, and she could see nobody but only hear the screaming, the wailing of children and the honking of motor horns.

Suddenly the driver jammed on the brakes.

"Run!"

The women with the children dropped into a ditch. Following the others, Natasha looked round to see what had happened. Next to her stood a man clutching a portfolio to his chest; he looked up at the sky shading his eyes with his hand. Natasha saw three planes. How low they were flying! For some reason at that instant she remembered how Professor Kartsev had offered to take her up in a plane with him to test his method of spraying apple trees from the air. And she had a momentary vision of an apple tree in bloom. A loud crackling noise brought her down to earth. She dropped down without thinking, perhaps because the man with the portfolio did the same. They were strafing the road. She lay as flat as she could, wishing that she could burrow into the ground.

When everything was quiet again, she got up and shook herself.

"They've gone!" she said gaily to the man with the portfolio. "We can get going again...."

But he did not reply. Perhaps he was feeling ill... She ought to unbutton his shirt collar. But when she touched his chest she recoiled in horror; the warm blood was thick and sticky. He still held the portfolio clasped firmly to his chest. Remembering how her father did it, Natasha bent over and put her ear to his chest. The heart was not beating. She saw the blood on her hands and dress and cried out. Those nearby shrugged their shoulders. She gazed down at the face of the dead man; it reminded her somehow of her father, though this man was younger... From the truck they were shouting that they wouldn't wait for her. Natasha wanted to take the briefcase, but the dead man's hand clutched it firmly.

But soon the truck stopped again. There was shooting ahead of them. The crowd surged back in the opposite direction. The word went around that the Germans had landed troops from the air.

"Paratroops near Borisov!"

There were no army men in sight. The crowd swayed to and fro in confusion. Some made for the woods, others declared it would be better to return to Minsk, the Germans were all over the place and Minsk at least was home... A pockmarked individual of about 40 was saying:

"Why should we be scared of the Germans? Are they wolves? We're not Communists... We lived under the Soviets, we can live under the Germans. Of course, if you're a Jew, that's another story."

Natasha was furious.

"How dare you!" she cried. "You must be a fascist!"

"I am an ordinary man. What right have you got to question me?"

"I'm a Soviet student."

He snickered.

"Go ahead and learn then. But don't try to teach me, I've been taught enough."

Natasha reddened with indignation.

"I am the wife of a Red Army officer and you are a traitor!"

When she said she was the wife of an officer, several of the women sided with her.

"I've got two sons in the army," shouted one of them. "And swine like you are ready to welcome the Germans. . . ."

The pockmarked individual disappeared in the crowd.

There was shooting nearby, but who was firing and at whom it was impossible to tell. The driver cursed.

"If they send me to the front, I'll go, but I don't see why I should stop a bullet here for nothing. . . ."

Natasha noticed that he was as pale as death and his lips were trembling. He left the car and walked off.

Natasha found herself alone. There were plenty of people everywhere but she did not know anyone. She walked for several hours without stopping. Twice the road was strafed and now she was walking through the woods. For a moment it seemed to her that nothing had happened, that she was merely taking a walk in the forest. She picked a late wild strawberry and ate it. It was very sweet with that queer taste of iron... Mushrooms too... No one would pick them now. What for? There was a war on! The man with the portfolio had been left lying on the road... A doctor or a teacher probably. How was Vassya faring? By now Minsk must be enveloped in flames... If only they would send him into action soon, then at least he would not be alone... But in the city it must be terrible with everyone running away, she saw him as he had stood there trying to smile. . . .

She lay down on the grass and slept until evening. Then she started walking again. Presently the forest ended. Passing a cottage she stopped and asked the peasant woman for a drink. The woman brought her some milk. She was kind and sympathetic.

"Poor lamb, you shouldn't try to walk. The Germans have cars, they'll catch up to you all the same. . . ."

An indescribable horror seized Natasha. It was not death that frightened her so much as other people's fear, other people's tears, this woman's pity. It terrified her to see the panic-stricken crowd, while the Germans calmly and coldly went on with their business of killing. And the children screamed, the carts screeched and the world spun round like a top, and there was no meaning to it all, no hope. . . .

The next day as she was trudging along wearily, exhausted body and soul and almost at the end of her strength, she saw two soldiers. Artillerymen.

"Are there any Germans in this direction?" she inquired. One of the soldiers laughed.

"Maybe you think the Germans are in Moscow too?"

The other looked at Natasha and said in a friendly way:

"There's no need to laugh. Can't you see she's scared stiff. She isn't used to all this... Don't worry, kid, keep a stiff upper lip. The Germans are here, of course, but wait, in a week or two we'll send them flying. . . ."

Natasha could have kissed these two soldiers. They spoke just like Vassya. How could she have allowed herself to get so discouraged. Shame! It was natural for women with children to get panicky... And then, of course, there were cowards... But these men were strong, they were laughing. This was the army, that meant it was true, in a few weeks or a month it would be all over... And then our troops would march across Germany. . . .

Later in the afternoon she was picked up by a truck which took her to Smolensk. Here Natasha experienced another air raid. It was a sort of test for her. She was not afraid, really not afraid, and she already knew which were our planes and which the German's. She would fight, as Vassya and those artillerymen were fighting, as the whole nation was fighting. . . .

Dmitri Alexeyevich was shocked when he saw Natasha. A startling transformation had taken place in her since he had last seen her. He could not tell whether it was simply weariness or the harrowing experiences she had undergone, but she was altogether changed. His little daughter had become a mature woman.

"Are you sure you are well," he said anxiously. "This is no time to be sick, you know. I can't be bothered with you, got enough wounded to attend to as it is. Run along and get some rest now. You'll tell us all about it tomorrow. . . ."

But he himself was too impatient to wait till then and soon he had the whole painful story. She told him everything and so shocked was he by her account of the fearful spectacle of flaming Minsk that her casual announcement of her marriage seemed to pass unnoticed.

"Well, you've come home just in time," he said. "I'm sending your mother to Aunt Olga in Aktarsk. You'll go with her. It's foolish to remain here. Moscow is bound to be bombed. You're no use here anyway, only a nuisance in fact. . . ."

Natasha shook her head vigorously.

"I'm not going to Aktarsk. And you needn't shout at me, because it won't do any good. I'm going to the front. Yes, yes. I mean it. I've thought it all out and I've decided. . . ."

"Hoity-toity, young woman. Don't you consider your parents' wishes any more? What will you do at the front? This isn't spraying orchards from airplanes! You think because Vassya is at the front you have to be there too? This is war my dear, you understand?"

"Yes, Dad, I understand. And Vassya has nothing to do with it this time... I can't stay here in the rear, I would go mad... I have seen them killing children. A man was killed right beside me... I shall never forgive myself for not taking his portfolio. I ought to have notified his relatives... Anyhow that is how it is. I've made up my mind. I hate them! And don't try to argue with me. Dad, I am serious. I have tested myself and I am sure that I won't run away, I'll be able to stand it. . . ."

Her mother began to weep. But Dmitri Alexeyevich went over to Natasha and embraced her.

"Good girl!" he said in a husky voice. "No, those savages will never get the better of us when even our flighty little girls are ready to fight. Eh, Natasha, it's mother I'm sorry for. You see, I'll be going off to the army soon, too. She'll be left alone. It will be hard for you, Varenka, I know, but you will have to bear it, there's no alternative... Natasha is right. We've got to fight...."

Our days are like beads strung side by side in a necklace, and when the string breaks and the beads scatter, trouble knocks at our door. That hot, green summer the necklace of a nation broke and all at once yesterday seemed remote and incomprehensible. Was it only yesterday that Sergei had argued with Belchev in defense of his project; that Nina Georgievna had raved about the way her pupil recited Hugo; that Lukutin had pored over a description of a new building material with as much absorption as if he were drinking in the lines of an inspired poem? Could it have been only yesterday that people were talking about rest homes and holidays, rejoicing as they moved into a new flat, weighing the price of a comfortable armchair, experiencing pangs of jealously, worrying because sonny had brought home a low mark for arithmetic, arguing about the new production of *Madame Bovary*? Was it only yesterday that life, despite the thousands of aggravations, heartaches and hardships had seemed so well established and good? And then someone had snipped the silken thread and days, years, life itself had scattered.

Outside recruiting stations stood knots of silent women. There were few tears. Too poignant were the emotions that crowded the heart. Jackets, Russian shirts, light summer suits hung limply from their nails in the cupboards like things condemned. Theatres were deserted. Railway stations became the hub of activity....

"I'm leaving from the Kiev Station...."

"Meet you at 1 P. M. at the Belorussian Station...."

At night old men, women and youngsters stood on guard outside the houses, the novelty of the situation filling them with pride mingled with alarm. Bright yellow sand was brought to fill boxes and sandbags and mothers' hearts would bleed to see some tiny tot toddle over to it thinking that it was for him to play with. The camouflaging of buildings began and presently they broke out into a red and green rash.

Someone with a hoarse voice entered our lives, he stared at us mortals with a face as flat and round as a pancake, he had neither eyes nor ears, only a mouth that belched forth terrifying words: "The enemy has reached Ostrov... on the Dnieper... the Vitebsk direction." The new use of the word "direction" was depressing.

"Have you read about the new direction?" people would inquire of one another when they met.

The war moved closer and closer to Moscow each day. Country places outside the city became deserted. Anti-aircraft units began to dig shelters next to the flowerbeds where gilly flowers still bloomed luxuriantly. The evacuation of kindergartens and schools began.

Troop trains moved from the East. The men were grimly silent and alert. Joking and laughter were rare. Slowly the trains with evacuées proceeded in the opposite direction. The wife of an army officer from Kaunas hobbled about uncomfortably in somebody else's dress that was too tight for her; she had rushed out of the house when the bombing began and had no time to dress; an old Jewess who had lost her granddaughter near Bialystok kept holding the child's doll in her arms; when the train stopped the women lit fires on the line and cooked meals; infants wailed.

The first groups of wounded were brought to Moscow. Nurses listened with wonder to accounts of how border guards had blown up tanks, and they went about repeating the words of the fighting men: "We'll beat them yet..." The loudspeaker in turn belched grim communiqués and lively tunes that failed to enliven. And under the Pushkin monument on the boulevard the children played war games unaware of the portent of "Smolensk direction."

Lukutin, watching them, felt a wave of fury rise within him. He thought of Richter. Around him people were talking about the Germans.

"All this talk about barbarism must be an exaggeration! Say what you like, Germany is a cultured country! Goethe, Heine, Beethoven, Marx...."

Lukutin, unable to restrain himself, remarked softly:

"Goethe has nothing to do with it. These are fascists...."

But to his companion the word "fascists" sounded like a newspaper term, and he went on:

"Universities, splendid laboratories, factories...."

The dreamy face of Richter rose before Lukutin's eyes. *He* would be capable of anything!

In the first few weeks of the war Lukutin had sent his wife and daughter to the Volga. Katya had been quite obstinate at first.

"You are just snatching at the chance to get rid of me," she stormed. "Can you picture life in Saratov?"

He did not reply, for he did not wish to anger her. He felt neither love nor hatred for this woman with the pale-gold dyed hair, and the nails that seemed to have been dipped in blood. She was a stranger who by some trick of fate happened to be there beside him. He tolerated her, for he was too timid to take the drastic step that would alter his whole life. And then he could not bear to part with little Polly. Although she was only three, Lukutin felt that his little daughter understood him and could comfort him. Half joking, half seriously he used to say to her: "We're pals, aren't we, Polly?" He wanted his wife to leave Moscow only because he feared for little Polly, he had a superstitious conviction that the fascists murdered children just like her. Richter's bewildered, kindly eyes were associated in Lukutin's imagination with the blood of Madrid and Warsaw, with something horrible, misshapen, brutal.

Katya had not held out long. After one experience of fire watching on the roof, she had said:

"This sort of life is not for me...."

In the early days of the war Lukutin, like

everybody else, lived on news bulletins, stories of eye-witnesses and rumours, and easily fluctuated between hope and despair. Someone told him that our troops had entered East Prussia and he believed it. A few hours later a man in the office said: "My sister got out of Vitebsk just in time. . ." Lukutin was bewildered and confused.

One glorious summer morning he went outside to get a breath of cool, fresh air. Since his wife had gone Lukutin had taken to sleeping at the office and was rarely home. The street was still deserted. Two workers passed him, a truckload of soldiers drove by and a peasant woman carrying a huge bundle panted noisily along. Suddenly Lukutin heard a familiar voice coming from the loudspeaker. It was Stalin. Lukutin was shaken by the intimate warmth of that voice. There was a note of anxiety in it, yet it possessed confidence and a strength of spirit which come in moments of grave trial to men who know that truth and justice are on their side. It seemed to Lukutin that Stalin was addressing him personally, that it was him Stalin called "friend".

How often in the past had Lukutin doubted! And now on this July morning he understood how strong were the ties that bound him to every house, every word, every person he chanced to meet. He felt the ground under his feet at the very moment when that ground had seemed to give way.

July that year was sultry. Every new bulletin from the front mentioned some new direction. Many of Lukutin's colleagues were already in action. Belchev was in the artillery, Sergei had been sent as commissar of an anti-tank battalion. Moscow's crooked streets looked unfamiliar without the noisy throngs of children. The city had fallen silent like a forest from which the birds have flown.

One very hot day a unit of the Home Guard marched down one of the now desolate side streets of the Zamoskvorechye district, singing:

"Give us the guns
And we'll be happy. . . ."

They sang as raggedly as they marched and it was quite obvious that these men who now carried rifles had been accustomed to holding pens or compasses. Some of them were past middle age, some were fat and short, some tall, some puny. There were men who suffered from asthma and men whose puffy faces told of heart disease; there were philologists and bookkeepers, botanists and artists, scene painters, cashiers, bookbinders, librarians, carpenters, electricians, men of all possible professions. Conscientiously they strove to master the rudiments of warfare. The hardest thing for them was to march in even formation.

Among them was Lukutin. He had ceased worrying. Even the bad news from the front seemed to trouble him less. Now that he had ceased to be merely an observer from the sidelines, he no longer speculated idly on the outcome: he had become part of the great machine of war.

At night he was often too weary to sleep. He would lie thinking tensely, furiously, as if compelled before his first battle to find the solution for all the problems that had puzzled him throughout the long years of his life. To the young, he told himself, everything is clear, they are defending their world. And he? Had he not wrestled with them in his soul, had he not opposed their arguments, sometimes with logic, sometimes with irrational emotion? There was a time when he had felt his own father to be hostile to his comrades. And now he believed that Stalin had spoken for them all, even for his dead father. . . Today they had passed an old church. He was not religious, yet there was something about that church, the cupola, the birch trees in the churchyard and the childhood associations it revived, that had brought a lump to his throat. And opposite was a school, now used as a recruiting station. That school stood for the childhood of those they were fighting for, and if they won little Polly might study there. Was this patriotism? Old Zhuravlev had said the day before: "We are defending Russia." No, it was not simply Russia that was dear to him, it was this Russia of today! Evidently there were fires that melted all thoughts and emotions, and in the crucible nothing is distinguishable. . ..

Finally he would fall asleep and at dawn the next morning he would be up for drill. He was happy. For the first time in his life there was no need to doubt, no need to argue with himself. Now he was a soldier. He would go wherever he was sent, do as he was ordered. There was something clear-cut and definite about war; the general noted something on the map; the battalion commander transmitted the order to the company commander and he, Lukutin, crawled, fired or sat in a dugout.

Later he smiled when he recalled these reflections. For the war turned out to be quite different. . . .

They spent the night in Vyazma in a small crooked house cluttered with broken furniture, bundles and rags. The landlady had a gumboil. She stared mournfully at the soldiers and sighed.

"Do you believe in God?" Lukutin asked, glancing at the ikons in the corner.

She shook her head: "Everybody's hanging them up again now," she said. "If the Germans come it'll be better that way. I wish I could believe in something. It would be easier to live. . . ."

"And the people, do you believe in them?"

She shook her head again.

"Just look at yourselves, you're such a dirty, shabby lot. But they say the Germans ride in cars. And their soldiers get chocolate in their rations. . . ."

Lukutin's friend Fedoseyev, who had been an employee in the Moscow Department Store before the war, was writing a letter to his wife, but overhearing the conversation he looked up and said to the landlady:

"You women are all the same. It's brute strength you admire! Just you wait, next time we come this way we'll be riding in cars too, and then you'll sing a different tune. . . ."

The landlady sighed. Her tooth ached and she was frightened. Some said the Germans were kind and that they brought all sorts of goods with them, others claimed they were bandits and robbers. One didn't know what to think, and for all you knew a bomb might hit you before the Germans came and that would be the end of it. . . .

But the next morning when Lukutin and

Fedoseyev were leaving, the landlady suddenly whispered:

"See you don't let those Germans come here!"

These words haunted Lukutin for a long time afterward. He kept recalling the mournful, stupid eyes of that woman: dying horses sometimes have eyes like that.

Fedoseyev must be thinking of his wife. Others had wives, parents, friends. All Lukutin had was little Polly, and he couldn't even write to her. She did not know what had happened to her papa... He must protect her, her and that woman with the gumboil. He must think of them all. Die for them all....

But suppose he should turn out to be a coward? He considered himself fainthearted. Had he ever dared to open his mouth against anyone, or to get up and speak at meetings? Even in his relations with Katya he was timid. How would he behave in a situation where even brave men had been known to lose their heads?

That night the Germans bombed the village where the battery was stationed. Enemy flares turned night into day.

"The bloody planes'll be here in a minute with all them fireworks!" muttered one of the men.

Lukutin lay on his belly wondering vaguely why he was so scared. He couldn't understand it! Could he really be the exception, just a miserable coward? Everything inside him seemed about to snap... And there was no turning back now... He had to face it.

Two days later he fought his first battle. It all happened suddenly. The general may have known, but the company commander did not even suspect that the German tanks had broken through. True, they had all been told time and again that there was no need to be afraid of tanks. The grenades and fire-bottles would take care of them. The important thing was not to get nervous, to sit tight and wait for the tank to come close... It had all sounded so simple when the battalion commander had explained it to them. Nevertheless the first encounter with enemy tanks caused some consternation among the men.

"Where are the bottles?" yelled Lieutenant Zhigach. "Shchogolev says he sent them this morning...."

The alarm found Lukutin in a narrow ditch overgrown with nettles. Fedoseyev and Levin were beside him. The fire-bottles had once been full of beer and Levin essayed a joke:

"All we need is a plateful of crayfish!"

Fedoseyev cursed. Lukutin was silent. His mind was a blank; his whole being was concentrated on the road. How long had they been lying there? Lukutin mechanically glanced at his watch but nothing registered. He heard rather than saw the approach of the leading tank. The roar and grinding increased. Lukutin crouched closer to the earth so that the nettles stung his face. There was a sharp bend in the road at this point and as the tank slowed down to take the corner, Lukutin caught a glimpse of a German in the turret hatch. An officer, he thought... Lukutin leapt up and flung the bottle. Then everything went black and he saw nothing.

"It's on fire!" he heard Fedoseyev's joyful shout.

Shots rang out. Lukutin again hugged the ground. But he was no longer afraid. Fear returned only that evening when Lieutenant Zhigach said:

"I'm recommending six men for decorations...."

At that moment full consciousness returned to Lukutin and he remembered everything, even the dark, gaunt face of the German. That was death! Death had bared its fangs at him! He checked himself. That was the way to become a fatalist; to gamble with destiny.., Funny that was, but terrifying too! Later on there would be guns, good guns. But in the meantime you fought with bottles. Queer that they should be beer bottles. But the tank burned wonderfully!

Fedoseyev was frankly amazed. Lukutin, whose old-fashioned, polite manners had been the joke of the company, stood there on the road and cursed with such vehemence that two dispatch riders passing by turned round to gape.

"Why, what's the matter with you, Pavel Sergeyevich?"

Lukutin smiled sheepishly.

"Nothing... Just war...."

Translated by Rose Prokofyeva

VALENTIN OVECHKIN

GUESTS IN STUKACHI

A serious question was being discussed in the administrative offices of the large Cossack farm, "Beacon of the Revolution". Who was to be sent to the neighbouring "Red Caucasus" collective farm to check up on how it was carrying out the socialist competition?

"We've got to send folks, said the chairman, "as can not only check up and check well, but set them to rights good and proper at the meeting afterwards. It's the end of the year, and we reckon up results. We need folks with tongues in their heads."

"Well, then," said brigade leader Dyadyushkin, "we'll send Kapiton Ivanovich Pecheritsa again. The whole collective wouldn't get the better of his tongue."

"Pecheritsa, that's right. Pecheritsa of course," came an assenting chorus from the collective farmers. "He'll be the main speaker."

"And Dyadyushkin too. Write it down: Andrei Savelich Dyadyushkin."

"Korzhov for the machinery."

"And Seryozhka Zamyatin."

"And Vassilissa Abramenko."

"That's right—for the livestock."

"That's enough," the chairman summed up. "And we need another from the group foremen."

"Pasha Kulkova!"

"Yes, I thought of her too. She's the right kind. She doesn't give us any peace here, let them have a taste of her too. Well, that'll do. And then any of the rest that want to go. As many as the lorry'll hold."

On Sunday morning a three-ton lorry stood waiting before the farm offices. Kapiton Ivanovich Pecheritsa, the Communist Party organizer at the farm and head of the laboratory, had claimed his right as head of the commission and commandeered the best place in the lorry—on the floor of the body with his back to the cabin, well sheltered from the sharp December wind. For added protection, he had turned up his collar, so that nothing could be seen of his face except his whiskers, a cold-reddened nose and dark brown eyes. Pasha Kulkova, a thin, fragile-looking girl with a pock-marked face and reddish hair, settled down beside him. Kapiton Ivanovich covered her with a corner of his sheepskin coat. The milkmaid Vassilissa Stepanovna Abramenko—Auntie Vassya, as she was called—a plump, rosy-cheeked Cossack woman, bundled in a dozen shawls and warm jerseys, clambered with difficulty up the side of the lorry, and with a cry of "For goodness sake, give me a hand!" rolled over right onto Kapiton Ivanovich's legs. Mikhailo Potapovich Korzhov, the blacksmith, who was so tall that he always looked as though he were on horseback in a crowd, kicked a stone lying by the roadside to the lorry, stepped onto it, swung a leg over the side and was up in a moment. The brigadier Dyadyushkin and the stableman Seryozha Zamyatin, both in Cossack undercoats and red coats brought a bench out of the office, placed it in the body, and seated themselves, scornful of the wind in their faces. Sergei was holding on his knees the shaft of a banner on which was embroidered in gold letters: "The Best Collective Farm—challenge banner of the Ostashkovsky District Soviet."

In addition to the commission, another fifteen collective farmers clambered onto the lorry. The Kuban hamlet of Stukachi, whither the commission was bound, consisted of people who had left their own large village at one time. The mother farm had many friends and relatives living there, and people took the opportunity to visit them.

The last to take his place was doddery granddad Akim Fedotych Shtanko, who intended to visit an old crony and fellow-campaigner from the Russo-Japanese war. Akim Fedotych's old wife accompanied him to the lorry, fussily bundling him in two towels—one round his waist to hold his sheepskin coat close, and the other round his neck, beneath his upturned collar.

"Eh, the old 'un 'ud fall to pieces if Granny didn't tie him together!" said Korzhov, and leaning over the side, he grasped the old man's tiny feeble frame under the arms and lifted him bodily onto the lorry.

"Well, now," said the chairman, glancing into the lorry. "You, Kapiton Ivanovich, see that everything's done in order. You're responsible. And those of you that are visiting your old friends and relations," with a stern look at Granddad Shtanko, "not too much of it or you'll be rolling out on the way back. As for the check-up—keep your eyes open. All got notebooks and pencils? Remember me to their chairman, Andrei Savelich! And to my brother, tell him I'm sorry I can't come, but I've got to go to the district offices."

"All right, we'll tell them."

Fedya Malyuk, the driver, started up the engine.

"All there?"

"Looks like it."

"Then we're off. Hold tight, Granddad!"

The village of Stukachi had got its name from the number of forges there.[1] On silent windless nights, anybody approaching the village could hear the ringing beat of hammers on anvils even when they were still at the ferry, two kilometres away. The village had another name—Novo-Ostashkovsky, given it when the boundaries were established, but this name appeared only in documents, and the people round about called it either Stukachi, or Red Caucasus, from the collective farm.

It was ten in the morning when the commission from the "Beacon of the Revolution" arrived. The farm offices were empty, the chairman, the manager and the bookkeeper were all at breakfast. There was only a caretaker to meet the guests, and she asked them to wait for a moment while she ran to fetch the chairman.

The visitors gathered in a circle. Kapiton Ivanovich pulled off his heavy, cumbersome sheepskin, took it out to the lorry, threw it into the driver's cabin and went back in his quilted coat—a tall, good-looking, black-whiskered Cossack, no longer young, but not yet old. Then there was a short consultation.

"We'll have to divide up," said Kapiton Ivanovich, "or we'll not be through till evening."

"Of course," replied Dyadyushkin, "each according to his job."

"Then we'll do it like this: you, Mikhailo Potapovich, deal with the inventory—repairs, maintenance, and all that. Take two more with ye. Only keep your eyes peeled, because they're stronger than us in that—blacksmiths tumbling over each other. Get right down to the bottom of things, and mind, see the quality's all right. Auntie Vassya and Sergei, you go over the farm, and take a look at the carts and the like, while ye're about it, eh, Andrei Savelich? Will ye manage it? Right. Then the stables are yours too. Make a job on it, Sergei, and don't be scared of a bit of elbow grease, if ye find a horse badly groomed roll up your sleeves, take a brush and show 'em how to do it. Pasha'll stop wi' us. She and I and Andrei Savelich'll look at the brigades, and the groups, and the seed fund and all the rest. Got it clear? Whoever's ready first come and join us."

From a cottage on the opposite side of the street there emerged the chairman, Nikolai Dyadyushkin, the brother of the "Beacon of the Revolution" Dyadyushkin, buttoning his cavalry greatcoat as he came. He had been a junior officer in the army, and was only recently demobilized.

"The chief's coming," said Korzhov.

"Young enough for a chief," remarked Kapiton Ivanovich. "He'll find it hard going. But

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[1] Stukachi—from *stukat*, to beat, hammer.

he looks as if he knows what's what, eh? What d'ye think, Andrei Savelich, can your brother make a job of it?"

Andrei Savelich shrugged his shoulders.

"Ye never can tell how folks'll turn out."

Nikolai Dyadyushkin, grinning broadly, shook hands with his brother and then with all the others.

"Got here all right, then? That's grand. We've expected ye for a long time. Oho, a good crowd of ye—brought the whole collective along! Come to learn a thing or two, maybe, how to run a farm? That's grand! We're always glad to help."

Kapiton turned to his companions with a twinkle.

"Hear that? There's a young 'un for ye. Got a tongue on him too. . . Well, and what d'ye think, Kolya, maybe we really can get some tips from ye. We don't object. Happens sometimes. There was last summer, our lads went to the "Sunrise", and when they came back they told us they'd never seen such a thing as using honey for axle grease, but they'd seen it there. There was one brigade where the cart axles hadn't been greased since the farm was started,and they hadn't a scrap of grease there. The brigade leader heard that the commission 'ud come, got scared we'd start looking at the carts, gave the driver two kilograms of honey from the kitchen, and told him that if anybody asked why it was so yellow, he was to say it was solidol. And our folks would never have guessed anything, but the cook let the cat out of the bag. When we sat down to dinner she gave us curd cakes with cherries and said: "I've got nothing sweet for ye, I'm sorry, I'd got a jug of honey put by just in case, but our scatterbrains got the idea to grease the axles wi' it, and took it from me." The axles? They rushed off back, took off a wheel, tried it wi' their tongues—honey, sure enough. Came home and told us. 'Here's a new idea for rationalization. Maybe we'll try it out? Might be cheaper.'"

The younger Dyadyushkin, not in the least offended, joined in the laughter of the visitors, slapping Kapiton Ivanovich on the back.

"Go on, go on, Uncle Kapiton! We don't mind!"

The life of the village was all in plain view. Stukachi was really only a hamlet, with one single street. The cottages stood in two even rows, with the bare wintry steppe stretching around, and the club and farm offices in the centre, on a slight rise. Anybody coming to the offices could be seen from all parts of the village, and within ten minutes a crowd had collected round the lorry.

"Give ye good day, neighbour!"

"You're here too, goodwife? Give ye good health! How are ye? And cousin Petro?"

"Good day to ye, Ma!"

"And glad I am to see ye, Daughter! Have ye brought Fedyusha? Ah, my little man, come to your Grandma! Give him here."

"Oho, Kapiton Ivanovich! Still alive and hale? Come to see us again?"

When everybody had finished greeting relatives and exchanging family news, and the crowd had swelled, Kapiton Ivanovich explained why they had come. He introduced himself as chairman of the checking commission, and the collective farmers with him as its members. Then he went on to explain how they intended to conduct the checkup. Dyadyushkin junior announced a general meeting at the club that evening.

"A-a-ah! . . Then some of us'll be shaking in their shoes again today?" said one of the Stukachi farmers. "Remember manager Yurchenko last time—looking for his notebook and couldn't find his pocket."

"No, it's going to be worse today. General checkup, all round."

A babble of talk broke out.

"And look what a pack o' ye's come! We'll have a job to hold our own wi' ye."

"Never fret, lads! No need to droop like moulting chickens! We're at home, and ye know the saying, in your own cottage even the pokers stand up for ye. Just wait till we go over to them, we'll give 'em something."

"And we'll send more still. Two lorries full!"

"And where'll ye get your two lorries? Have ye fixed the one Yurchenko smashed when he went after hares?"

"It's fixed. And five hundred rubles down against him. Been running a long time. Ye'll be talking about that hare for three years, Kapiton Ivanovich."

"And what's that ye've got wi' ye on the machine? The challenge banner? Have ye brought it for us?"

"Aye, ye had it once. Recognize it?"

"And it'll come back to us again, never fret."

"Eh, o' course they're going to leave it here. Why cart it back and forth? We'll go and get it anyway."

"Your arms are too short to get that banner," replied Kapiton Ivanovich. "It's got to feel at home wi' us. . . Aye, and there's a resolution about that banner I can tell ye, if you're interested: ye'll take it off us when your spotted bull that Mitka Storozhenko pulled the tail off, grows a new one—and not before."

The villagers' laughter was not quite as hearty as that of the guests.

"The devil take him! Smelt it out already! Why, it happened only yesterday."

"News travels. We got it by 'phone."

Now Granddad Shtanko put in his word. He was chilled from the journey, but had not gone straight to his old crony. Etiquette must be observed.

"We can't lose the banner," he mumbled, using his woollen glove to rub his frozen cheeks, wet with tears from his inflamed old eyes. "In the old days if a regiment lost its flag, then it was dissolved. That's how it was."

"Well, that won't happen to us, Granddad," replied Kapiton Ivanovich. "Who's going to take it—them there? Take a look at 'em—do they look like such heroes? Make a start with the offices. Step's broken and no one to mend it—d'ye want us to send our carpenter over? Can't keep their boots clean—there's culture for ye! I've not been inside the offices, but I can mind what they were like last time—stove peeling, smoking, a hole in the wall, and bricks tumbling down right on the bookkeeper's head, no spittoon, and thick wi' smoke. Isn't that right? Well, there ye are. How's your bookkeeper—not been killed wi' a brick yet? No, he's alive. I see him coming. . . How

do, Comrade Bookkeeper! I was just talking about ye. Worrying about whether ye're still alive."

"There's no holes there now—all filled up. And the stove's been put right," called the caretaker from the porch. "Ye need to take a look before ye start wagging your tongue. Eh, Uncle Kapiton! Wait till we come over to you!"

Confused by the general laughter, she drew her shawl over her face and shrank back into the doorway.

Dyadyushkin tugged Kapiton Ivanovich's sleeve.

"Why d'ye want to fall over them in all that rush? Do it proper, if we're going to inspect, then let's go."

Dyadyushkin junior, with the same broad grin, invited the visitors in to warm up.

"Uncle Kapiton! What's your haste? There's plenty of time. Come and sit ye down wi' me a bit. Maybe ye haven't had breakfast yet? Come and have a bite first."

"Nay, ye' don't catch old birds wi' chaff!" said Kapiton Ivanovich, with a wave of the hand. "A bite to eat, a drink or two—we know all about that! If we're hungry we'll keep our eyes skinned better, we'll be more carping. And now, Comrade Chairman, you'd do better to worry about all the folks being in their places. Let's go. Auntie Vassya! Mikhailo Potapovich! Come on, let's start. All at the club at four. Write everything there. Facts, get all the facts ye can. That's what bothers 'em."

The space before the farm offices emptied. Korzhov went with two collective farmers from the "Beacon" to look at the machinery, followed by a procession of the villagers. Vassilissa Abramenko and Zamyatin, also surrounded by collective farmers, made for the livestock at the end of the village. Dyadyushkin junior went with Kapiton Ivanovich and his brother.

"And you, Kolya, don't be getting anything up just now," said Kapiton Ivanovich, without any trace of his customary smiles. "We had breakfast at home, we're not hungry. Better later on, when we've done the checkup, or we won't get through. Well, and how's it all here? Tell me all your news."

Nikolai Dyadyushkin had been following Kapiton Ivanovich; now two or three quick steps brought him between the latter and his brother.

"Things are going a mite better. Ye don't get much done in two months, but all the same, we've got some of it set to rights a bit. Got two dead souls out of the administration. Ivan Grigorich's our manager now. But the livestock, that's where there's a mess. Patsyuk's not doing so well. Give him hell at the meeting today... And mind, we haven't done any preparing for today, no eyewash. Yesterday Ivan Grigorich says to me, 'The bathhouse's dirty, what about sending some o' the girls to clean it up a mite?' But I says to him: 'Putting a bit of eyewash on, eh? Drop it! I'll take 'em there and show 'em myself.' Fyodor Storchak started clearing away the wheat out of the seeders—finished the winter sowing, and left it lying there to sprout. I jumped on him—'Drop that!' I says. 'Ye should ha' got that done before. Started to sprout, let it get ears on it for the commission.'"

"Never mind," said Andrei Savelich. "We'll settle their hash today. Yes, and yours too—for letting them get away wi' it. It's a disgrace—a tail pulled off a bullock!.. Well, come along to the barns and show us the seed."

It was a cold December day. Grey clouds hung over the village, and snowflakes whirled and drifted. The wind kept changing—first gusts would come from the north, then it would turn west, then die down altogether. The clouds lowered, darkened, until it seemed as though evening were come. The heavens were preparing for something. That night there would probably be a heavy snowfall, a blizzard, real winter.

Mikhailo Potapovich Korzhov, his short quilted jacket fastened up tightly, walked between the rows of seeders, harrows and cultivators. Hard on his heels came the Red Caucasus blacksmiths, collective farmers and children—about fifty in all. Korzhov strode among them, tall, broad-shouldered, a head above any of the crowd.

"Heh, you, the manager, Ivan Grigorich!" he called. "Have ye given them the tip to get under my feet and stop me getting a good look in? Tell 'em to get back a mite, I can't get at anything."

The Red Caucasus machinery was all repaired and ready for the spring work. That pleased Mikhailo Potapovich. Good, ready in good time. And care and protection for it, too, not at all bad. On three sides the yard was covered with a shingle roof put up in the autumn. Somewhere to put the machinery in bad weather.

"Get everything under cover today," Korzhov told the manager. "Ye can see there's snow on the way."

But suddenly Mikhailo Potapovich halted beside a horse-drawn seeder, squatted down and began carefully examining a small bolt, pressed his finger against the disc of one of the coulters, asked the blacksmith for a spanner and tested the nut. Yes, he'd thought as much. The bolt had a left thread, when the disc turned the nut fastened with its movement. The first time the seeder went along the furrows, the nut would fasten tight and the disc would cease to revolve. Mikhailo Potapovich pointed out this carelessness to the smiths. They agreed, and one made off at the double for the smithy, brought back another bolt and changed it on the spot. But Korzhov did not rise, he still squatted under the seeder, examining the coulters, thinking something out.

"Tell me honestly," he said, glancing over his shoulder at Trofim Mironovich Kandeyev, the head smith of the Red Caucasus. "What do you do when the finger wears? Put on a washer?"

"Why, yes," Kandeyev replied.

"An iron one?"

"Aye."

"And the same wi' the tractors?"

"Aye, the tractors too."

"Aye, and that's why your sowing's always in lumps and clumps. All smiths here, but couldn't see it. A washer's muck. Either it

turns till it binds, or else it shakes loose in a couple o' days, and the disc's rattling again."

"But there's no other way," said Kandeyev.

"Have to set the finger."

"Aye, but how are ye going to set it when it's steel and cemented?"

"It's possible. Not wi' a sledge hammer, of course. Lightly, carefully."

"Nay, it can't be done," Kandeyev insisted obstinately. "However careful ye are, it'll be shattered."

"Can't be done, can't it? Take off one o' them discs and come on to the forge."

The argument was settled by the furnace. Kandeyev worked the bellows, and Korzhov took his place at the anvil.

"Keep away from that door!" the manager Butenko shouted to the collective farmers, who were crowding about the entrance, keeping out the light.

Korzhov placed the finger of the disc in the furnace, and took off his jacket. The noise and talk died down. The bellows' handles creaked, the flames hissed, sending up long fiery tongues over the bed of coal. Seizing the right moment, when the metal was hot enough but not too hot, Mikhailo Potapovich removed the finger with the tongs and stooped over the anvil. With well calculated, exact, light blows of the hammer he set it. Five minutes previously, he had not been too hot in his quilted jacket, but now beads of sweat stood out on his forehead, although he was clad only in a light underjacket. His eyes were fixed in grim concentration, his lips were pursed—this was a serious moment for the reputation of a first-class master smith. . . Without giving the finger time to cool, Korzhov threw it into the warm ashes, stretched out to his full height—his head nearly reaching the ceiling—and wiped his brow with his sleeve. . . All the smiths measured the finger with callipers. It had given just two millimetres—the exact amount necessary. A touch with the file and everything would be in order—no need for any washer.

"Well," said Mikhailo Potapovich triumphantly. "Did it smash? Write that down, Petro Kuzmich!" he said, turning to the "Beacon" collective farmer accompanying him. "Wish I'd bet a litre of vodka on it! If ye treat all your discs like that, your sowing'll look a sight different, straight as a die."

"Yes, looks like we'll have to do that," said a rather confused Kandeyev. "Thanks for the tip, neighbour."

At the harrows, Korzhov took the spanner and began tightening all the nuts on the teeth. Nearly every one turned once or twice.

"Why don't ye get them tight? That's no good. They'll be rattling on the clods."

"Nay, them's not loose!" cried Kandeyev in surprise. "I tested 'em myself, they were all right. It's just that ye've got more'n a man's strength to twist 'em with."

Kandeyev fitted the spanner on a nut, but though he used all his strength, it refused to budge. Korzhov took the spanner from him and without any apparent effort turned that same nut twice more.

"Feeble, feeble, neighbour!"

Everybody laughed, including Korzhov and even Kandeyev.

"We need to take a bit of his strength!"

"Got enough for seven!"

"Nay, Mikhailo Potapovich," said Kandeyev. "Ye can't count that against us. Can't compare your strength with an ordinary man's. There's only one o' your sort in the whole Krasnodar Province."

"Right ye are," laughed Korzhov. "Nothing reckoned there. But there's something to reckon on here," and he lifted one of the harrows.

The harrow was bent in the frame, the teeth were all ways, hammered out. All the smiths shrugged their shoulders in perplexity. It was very obvious that this harrow had not been to the smithy for repairs. How had it got there? Evidently one of the brigade leaders must have found it lying somewhere and had hauled it here into the common heap.

"Well, we don't know how it got here," said Korzhov. "That's your business, settle it yourselves." He unfastened the harrow, raised it, and hurled it over the heads of the collective farmers towards the smithy door. "That's its place for the present. And don't ye try to tell anyone that your machinery's repaired a hundred per cent. Write that down, Petro Kuzmych! Well, what else have ye got? Let's see it all."

. . . At the stockfarm, whither Sergei Zamyatin, Vassilissa Abramenko, the swineherd Motya Serdyukova and the stableman Maxim Petrovich Dronov had directed their steps, such a crowd had gathered that when the commission passed through the sties or the cowsheds, they were followed by a procession reaching from the entrance to the exit. All the collective farmers working with the livestock, had gathered here—milkmaids, cattlemen swineherds, watchmen, watercarriers.

The guests already knew from their neighbours who had previously inspected the "Red Caucasus" that the stock was the weakest point. And now they saw it for themselves. The buildings pleased them—standard brick buildings roofed with iron, but that was all. From the outside they looked fine, but when one entered everything was at sixes and sevens. It was evident that in the first years of collectivization, somebody here had seriously undertaken to develop livestock breeding, but later on the leadership had changed, others had paid less attention to this branch of farming, the stockbreeding had been neglected, and some of the buildings were even unoccupied. The visitors had heard unflattering remarks about the head of the stock section, Patsyuk. Things had been particularly bad recently, under his management. But Patsyuk was not among the villagers surrounding the commission.

"But where's Patsyuk?" asked Vassilissa Abramenko. "Doesn't he know it's checkup?"

"Not know? O' course he does."

The visitors were not pleased with either the cattle section or the sheep section. The cattle were dirty and thin, and the productivity of the section was low. The so-called sheep section, held only fifty beasts. It was a sheep section in name only, and the animals were of all breeds, a poor lot. But when the commission came to the pig section, they found that this was the worst of all—the animals were small, humpbacked, with more bristles than fat.

Motya Serdyukova, who was accustomed to tending pedigreed English pigs, white, well kept, looked at these miserable animals, shook her head and pursed her lips in contempt.

"I didn't think there was pigs like this left in the world, but looks like there is. What d'ye want to keep them rats for? Ain't it time to get some pedigrees?"

Vassilissa Abramenko looked at one spotted sow, long and brown, moving with the agility of a greyhound, and began to crack jokes.

"Isn't that the pig we chased on the lorry today? Eh, lasses, ye'd never believe it, we came near the village, and out it jumped from somewhere, and raced off afore the lorry. The driver went up to sixty, but she still kept ahead on us. Ran and ran, and we couldn't catch her nohow. We laughed till we nearly bust. It was just another spotted one like yon. And I said, if only we could get some like them at a factory, our hunters could take them to course hares wi'."

"We ought to take her to show the folks at home," said Sergei Zamyatin. "They'd think it was a wild one. They'd all rush to see it as if it was something from the zoo."

But Maxim Petrovich Dronov walked about, looked in the sties, and spat silently. This was too much for the swineherds.

"Ye ought to spit on Patsyuk's bald pate!" cried one of them, Avdotya Suchkova, a tall, thin, stern-looking woman with thick black brows meeting over her nose. "Spit on him, the devil, and get on wi' it!" And infuriated by the mockery of the visitors, she began talking angrily. "Ye needn't be bragging about your beasts, comrades, it's because ye got good managers! Aye! And it's none so pleasant for us to listen to all yon, either. Anybody that comes to the farm, they all get a good laugh out o' our swine. Hunting hares! That Patsyuk, he's the sort ye can't catch him wi' dogs, now make a guess where's he's got to. Ye can see for yourselves—head o' the stock farm, a commission's come, and he's gone off, hidden himself, mebbe, for shame... We've been after him all right to get pedigree swine. Folks go here and there, find out where there's a state farm selling them, there's a collective farm got 'em, ye only need to take a bit o' trouble. But he doesn't fret. What's he want to worry wi' that for? All his hair's coming out wi' vodka!"

All present began pouring out their indignation about Patsyuk.

"The swine's been sleeping on cement for a year, nothing to bed 'em down on, no straw. It's rotting on the steppe, they're burning it there, but can't get it here. We've talked and talked to Patsyuk till we're tired!"

"What did they want to send him here for? He doesn't care a rap for the whole thing!"

"Say, ye're wrong there, he was good all right, at first, but he soon cooled off...."

"Thought himself better nor other folks... Got swelled head...."

Among the collective farmers surrounding the commission was Granddad Abrosim Ivanovich Chmelyov, the night watchman. The Beacon people, who knew all the villagers well, remembered him as a crusty old fellow with a tongue on him and a fine flow of language on occasion, but bound up heart and soul in the farm.

"Well, Abrosim Ivanovich, and what have ye got to tell us?" Dronov asked him. "Why's it so bad here wi' ye? What's going on here wi' Patsyuk? You're in this department too, you're the watchman. Ye ought to know."

"Naught for me to say," the old man replied with a wave of the hand. "Ye can see for yourselves. I've naught to say..." Then after a moment's silence, he proceeded to explain: "If I start talking now, then I'll get it all out too soon and there'll be naught left for evening. Nay, I'm not doing that. I'll tell it ye all at the meeting, down to the last mite, just where the trouble is. D'ye think it's only Patsyuk? E-e-eh, the sons of bitches, the way they've let it all go!"

Not another word could be got out of Abrosim Ivanovich. He merely followed the commission and agreed whenever the visitors observed something not in order. And they cottoned on to the smallest details.

"Why've ye got the hay so close to the cow shed, right under the roof?" asked Dronov.

"Aye, aye!" put in Granddad Chmelyov approvingly. "Ye tell it 'em too, I've told the skunks myself."

"And throwing the feed about as if they thought there'd be a second haymaking," noted Vassilissa Abramenko, picking up a good-sized bundle of hay that somebody had dropped on the ground.

"Aye, aye, that's right!" the old man agreed. "Ye ought to see how they take silo feed—scatter it all along the road. And if ye could be here when they're milking—beat the beasts, they do, and curse them! That's enough to make any cow as knows summat hold its milk!"

"Who've ye got doing a daft thing like that?" asked Dronov.

"Who is it? Why, Anyutka first of all..."

"Eh, dear Lord! Abrosim Ivanovich!" And the milkmaid Anna Kudrikova threw up her hands and flushed up, nearly in tears. "What for d'ye want to disgrace me? When did ye ever hear me cursing?"

"I didn't hear ye cursing, but I did see ye hit a cow wi' a spade."

"So-o-o! Write that down, Sergei!" said Dronov with intentional sternness, winking at Zamyatin.

"What's that? Write me down?" Kudrikova dashed up to Sergei. "Me? And so I'm to answer for all of it? And what about Manka Fedotova—the way she beat 'em, is that nothing? And Marishka never cleans her cows and doesn't wash the udders... what about that? Am I the only one?"

Noise, laughter. Marina Petrova cried:

"An' if I don't clean them it's because I've no time. Always having to milk your cows for ye. Just you tell 'em why ye never show your nose on the farm for three days at a time? Too busy trading? Going off to Sochi wi' eggs and butter for the market?"

"Now, now, that's enough, keep quiet, girls!" Vassilissa Abramenko calmed them. "Just tell us this, how's it that ye haven't carried out your plan for milk deliveries yet? How much milk do ye get? Who's your brigade leader for the commercial milk farm? Chichkin? Makar Emelyanovich, come along

here. What d'ye feed your cows? According to standard or what they'll take? All the same?.. How many cows have ye put on special feed, for getting more milk? Not one? Oho, looks like ye're working same as folks worked in the Stone Age!"

Meanwhile, Kapiton Ivanovich, with Dyadyushkin and Pasha Kulkova had gathered the collective farmers in one of the field brigades and were talking with them about preparations for the spring sowing. They went into the brigade's plans in as great detail as though they themselves were intending to work there the year through—asked how much of each crop the brigade would sow, how the soil had been prepared in autumn, and whether the fields had been assigned correctly for crop rotation; they checked up on how the groups in the brigade were formed—whether the farmers volunteered, or whether the brigade leader assigned people to their group leaders, simply according to lists. There was a good deal of laughter and joking—and some people feeling rather hot and uncomfortable as a result, particularly when Kapiton Ivanovich, who as head of the laboratory at home had a leaning towards science, began testing the agrotechnical knowledge of the sowers and group leaders, and then started on the brigade leaders. This turned out to be the farm's weak point—study. True, the questions he put were not simple ones, but some of the replies were so absurd that in the end Kapiton Ivanovich said:

"Mebbe, Comrades, it makes ye nervous having so many of us here? But what were ye saying, that next year ye're going to the agricultural exhibition? There'll be more folks there. Ye'll lose your heads entirely and say such daft things that folks'll be ashamed to listen to ye, they'll drive ye away from Moscow!"

They were the last to finish—they went round all the brigades, examined the laboratory, looked into the seed barns, went into the collective farmers' cottages and ended their work in the office—reckoning up the harvests and the profits of each branch, the cost of workdays[1] and other things needed for exact checking of the socialist competition agreement.

Kapiton Ivanovich had filled his notebook. Now he was very serious, his jests ceased; he was silent, absorbed, only asking Korzhov, Vassilissa Abramenko and Zamyatin about the checkup in their departments; he wrote something more, and had nothing more to say to anybody until evening, while he prepared for the meeting, and thought out what had to be said. Before the meeting Dyadyushkin junior invited all the "Beacon of the Revolution" farmers to dinner in the club, where a spread table had been awaiting the guests for a long time. There too, Kapiton Ivanovich only flushed a little after two glasses of vodka, but said nothing, ate little, and very soon left the table and went aside to the window, where he paced silently up and down until dinner ended.

Korzhov winked at Dyadyushkin junior, "There he is composing—on your head be it. For all your hospitality."

There was plenty of noise and merriment in the club. A brass band, the pride of this outlying collective farm which distance deprived of the cultural advantages of the large villages, was playing waltzes and polkas out of tune, true, but with such a deafening enthusiasm that the very lamps flickered. The girls were dancing in the clear space in front of the benches.

"Ye see that?" Chairman Dyadyushkin shouted in his brother's ear, pointing at the band. "That's something I've started."

"Not so bad," replied Brigade Leader Dyadyushkin. "A thing ye need on a collective farm... But why can't they keep together wi' their music, instead of like goats pulling all ways?"

"Not had enough practice yet. It's not long since I allowed them in here, before that they went to the forest, as far from folks as they could get, to do their practising. Don't fret, they'll learn!"

It was already dark outside. A cold wind had risen, and snow was falling. On entering the club, the collective farmers stamped the snow from their boots and brushed it off with twig brooms, and shook their caps. Fedya Malyuk, the "Beacon" driver, was looking out of the window anxiously—would the road drift up before it was time to return?

All the benches were filled, but people were still arriving. Dyadyushkin, mounting the stage, looked over the large room. This was going to be an unusual meeting. Despite the bad weather, there was a record attendance—if not a hundred per cent, then something very near it. He made a sign to the conductor to stop the band, took off his cavalry cap with its blue band, laid it on the table, and smoothed his tousled hair with his hand.

"Time to begin, comrades!" he called.

Dyadyushkin did not leave the stage when the presidium had been elected, but waited for a few moments to announce the agenda and "set off the meeting."

"Today, comrades, we have one question—checkup of the socialist competition agreement. Our guests will report. Let's leave the seeds alone for the time being, we can do without them for a bit![1] Girls! What have you got turned around for—backs to the presidium? Feklushka! Nastya! Where d'ye think ye are—at a party? Sit up properly. And what are those kids doing in the corner there? Off ye go home to bed. Let them through, there. There's active farmers for ye, not a meeting can we have without 'em!.. Well, time to begin. Semyon Trofimych! Get it started."

The chairman was Brigade Leader Semyon Trofimych Elkin, a middle-aged man, gloomy and unshaven, with a smoke-roughened voice and untidy clothes. He was wearing a dirty quilted jacket, over a torn, greasy underjacket, its sleeves longer than that of the quilted jacket, while the tails of the shirt, not tucked into the trousers at the waist, were longer still. Everything was hanging open, without a single button to fasten it. Elkin's cap was calfskin, with all the hair rubbed off

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[1] Unit of payment on collective farms, ;ed on the amount reckoned for one day's -k.

[1] A Russian rural habit—cracking sunflower seeds in the teeth and eating the kernals.

in places, and a broken, dangling, peak. He never removed it, merely shifting it on his head. Now he pulled it forward and somewhat to the side, to shade his eyes from the bright light of the large paraffin lamp standing on the table, and gave the floor to the commission.

Korzhov rose from the front bench, which had been reserved for the guests, and mounted the stage. He edged his huge body with difficulty through the tiny door into the wings, caught something with his shoulder in the cramped, crowded space behind, and sent it to the floor with a crash, causing smothered laughter in the hall, had more difficulties with the door onto the stage, so that the thin plywood walls trembled and seemed about to collapse—the laughter was increasing—and at last, overcoming the final difficulty, and leaving a piece of his fur jacket on the latch, he emerged, red and confused, onto the stage, and took his place at the table, straightening to his full height.

Turning to the collective farmers, Kapiton Ivanovich explained:

"We decided to take the departments first, and then the farm as a whole. Any objections?"

"Nay, none at all! Do it as ye like!" came from the hall.

Korzhov took his notebook from his jacket. Silence fell. The sound of the wind could be heard, driving the snow against the windows. Once more Nikolai Savelich wished that all meetings could be like this—full attendance, silence and attention.

"Can't make this writing out," said Korzhov, turning the pages of the notebook. "It's Petro Kuzmich wrote this. . . Well, all right, I'll tell it ye from memory, I shan't be long. . . Petro Kuzmich and I checked up on all the machinery. Well, it's repaired, ye could start sowing today. Got a place to put it under cover, enough room for it. Only one thing I'd like to know"—and Korzhov looked at the dark window, with the blizzard howling outside—"have ye got it under cover or not? It was out in the yard today."

"It's under cover," said the manager Butenko.

"Then that's all. . . I can't say nothing against quality of work, it's good. It's true I did find one harrow—the teeth like a hedgehog's bristles, sticking out every way, hadn't been for repairs at all, but put wi' the repaired ones, but that looks like a mistake, it had just got forgotten. Right. . . Then we had a bet with the blacksmiths."

"What happened?"

"What bet?"

"A bet, I tell ye. Got into an argument who could set the finger on the disc better." Korzhov's eyes found Kandeyev. "Wi' him, it was. Well, that's our affair, our job. The way Kandeyev had repaired them was all right, it's what other folks do, but the way I showed him was better, the sowing'll be straighter. And we smiths, as I see it, we've not only got to think of how to fashion iron, but of agrotechnics. Isn't that right, comrades smiths? There, then. . . Well, the ploughs, cultivators, couplings—all there. There's trucks for the tractors. One thing I wanted to say about the brichkas.[1] I was right glad to see how ye've looked after the flat carts. In your farm each one's got new wheels and there's even spares, ready for the foals. That's good! If I was your administration I'd give the wheelwrights a premium, as the best Stakhanovites. They deserve it. Ye can say they've put the farm on wheels. And I'd like to advise ours to do the same. Kapiton Ivanovich! You're a member of our administration, you mind that. We can send the men to the mountains, and prepare plenty of rims and hubs wi' spokes and we'll make 'em ourselves —they'll be no worse than factory ones. What's wrong wi' us—got no wheelwrights, or can't find 'em? We'll make three dozen brichkas and get out of our troubles. We keep waiting for the agricultural supply department, but they've got a thousand applications just the same as ours!"

"Question to Korzhov!" came a voice from the front row where the "Beacons" were sitting. "What do they grease their axles wi'?"

"Axle grease, o' course," Korzhov replied. "Nay, ye can't find ought here, got to be fair —they've looked after their machinery well, wouldn't hurt us to take a lesson from 'em!"

"Another question!" One of the "Red Caucasus" blacksmiths was standing. "What about you, Comrade Korzhov, how's your machinery repaired?"

"Can't say as things is very bright there," Korzhov replied. "But not so bad either. If ye come over next Sunday, we'll be finished by then. We haven't got so many smiths as you have, but we'll finish all the same. We're in a bad way wi' the carts, as I've told ye, but the seeders and harrows, I'd say, them's about ready. To cut it short, I won't boast but come over and see for yourselves. . . ."

There were no more questions. Korzhov turned round and went back to his place.

"Not got much to say, ye haven't!" And Kapiton Ivanovich shook his head. "Not brought in much, Mikhailo Potapovich! Ye're not praising them too much, maybe?"

"No, I've not praised 'em too much," Korzhov replied, seating himself cautiously on the rickety steps leading to the stage. "Can't help it, Kapiton Ivanovich! Ye know the tale of the two frosts—one went to blow on the rich man, the other on the poor man. But the one that got the poor man couldn't get the better of him—he'd be cutting wood and keeping warm, and the frost couldn't get at him. Well, that's how it was wi' me today. Gave me the toughest job—the place where they're strong.

"Blew and blew, and couldn't touch 'em?"

"Couldn't touch 'em! Too much for me. If it's good, ye can't say as it's bad."

Meanwhile, the milkmaid Vassilissa Abramenko had mounted the stage, and was standing at the table. After Korzhov's calm measured speech, barely audible in the back rows, the hall was now filled with the rapid spirited speech of the black-browed Cossack woman. She had a ringing, penetrating voice—at home, Auntie Vassya was the best leader in the farm choir. The warm shawls she had wrapped round her for the journey hindered her speech, so she took them off, and removed

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[1] Light cart.

her quilted jacket—the club was already becoming warm and stuffy. Without interrupting her speech or turning, she threw everything onto the corner of the table. The chairman, Semyon Elkin, glancing at her askance from beneath the broken peak of his cap, carefully moved the things further from the edge, to prevent them from falling. There was a stir among the rows of collective farmers.

"Doesn't it gie ye a pain?" the indignant Vassilissa Stepanovna was saying, with an angry glance at the "Red Caucasus" manager. "Or don't any of ye, the management, ever look in there? Buildings like that, all the money laid out! What did ye want to build it all for then? Your tongues ought to be 'shamed to say it—five hundred litres from a cow! A good goat'll gie more!.. Them poor beasts! We looked at them cows o' yours—we just felt sorry for them. All mucky, standing in the wet, and the window stuffed up wi' straw. And then blame them! We asked the milkmaids why there's so little milk, and they say, bad cows. I wanted to ask your livestock manager what he thought of it, and here's a fine thing—we couldn't lay eyes on him. Been looking for him all day—where's he got to? Nikita Alexeyevich! Are ye here?"

"He's here!" several voices answered for Patsyuk, from a distant corner.

"Well, thank heavens, or we'd 'a' thought ye'd run off to the Kuban to drown yourself for very shame."

"Eh!" came a voice from somewhere. "Make him do that! He's not so shamefaced."

"Then how d'ye explain it, Nikita Alexeyevich?" Abramenko continued. "We get two thousand litres, and ye get five hundred? Who's to blame—the cows?"

"The bulls," said one of the "Red Caucasus" collective farmers under his breath, evidently hinting at something everybody knew, then choked and coughed.

There was a burst of laughter.

"Mebbe it's the bulls, you know best, but it's not the cows' fault. Your cows ain't bad ones. The swine, now, they're no good at all, more like rats nor swine, ye ought to ha' slaughtered 'em long ago and got pedigree swine, and not be wasting feed on them once, but there's no need to damn the cows, they're good 'uns, there's Germans, and Siementhals, the sort that can give ye three thousand litres. But where are they to get it from, the milk? Ye've got no right system of feeding, don't reckon the feed units. We began asking the milkmaids and brigade leaders and they looked at us as if we was talking some foreign tongue—what's that, then, feed units? They didn't even know the word. But muck, now, they know what that is 'cause they're up to their knees in it—the cows and the milkmaids too... Eh, you!.. And ye think to have a competition wi' us! How d'ye think ye can get anywhere near us, like that?"

"Permit me to ask the stock manager," this was Maxim Petrovich Dronov rising. "Tell me this, Nikita Alexeyevich—can ye pile up the hay by the cowshed, right under the roof? And if someone throws down a cigarette—the hay goes up and the cowshed wi' it! Answer the question. Aye, and where is he? Patsyuk!"

"He's here!" Patsyuk rose from the back row, a stout man with long Ukrainian moustaches, wearing a Kuban cap on one side. "I'm here. Where's it right under the roof? Better put on some spectacles!"

"Now don't ye lose your temper, Nikita Alexeyevich!" said Chairman Dyadyushkin. "Keep calm! What's that talk about spectacles? Answer to the point."

"Eh, he..." and with a strong word or two Granddad Abrosim Ivanovich Chmelyov shot up from his place, made his way through the rows of benches and went up to the stage.

"Where are ye off to, Granddad?" called Semyon Elkin, gesturing him back with his hand. "Where are ye off? Get back. it's too early yet. The discussion's not opened."

"I don't need any o' your discussion," the old man replied. "The time's come to me to say my mind, and I'm going to say it, and don't ye interrupt me, for the love o' Christ, or I'll drop it." The old man stopped. "Eh, I just can't stomach it, it's fair sickening! Whenever I begin to talk, then it's some rule or other that's not right, or it's not opened yet or it's closed now. The devil take ye all!" And the old man turned back.

"But the commission's not ended yet. Ye've got to keep to the proper order, Abrosim Ivanovich," Elkin urged.

"Never mind, let Granddad have his say," said Kapiton Ivanovich. "We'll wait. Come on, come up, Abrosim Ivanovich!"

"Go on, Abrosim Ivanovich!"

"Give Granddad the floor!" came from the body of the hall.

"All right, let him speak," Dyadyushkin said to Elkin, "But you, Abrosim Ivanovich, careful o' your language. There's women here."

"That's as may be," the old man replied, and mounted the stage.

"Collective farmers of the 'Red Caucasus!'" Abrosim Ivanovich began solemnly. "How long are folks going to be coming here and shaming us wi' our livestock? Mebbe it doesn't gie ye a pain, as Comrade Abramenko said, but it is not so wi' me, because though my job's a small one, I'm just the watchman, all the same I'm in that department and counted as one of the stockmen. Christ A'mighty. I tell ye straight—I've got a bellyfull!.. Ye've been asking who's to blame, and that's what I want to talk about, about them same sons o' bitches that have got our stock into such a way, the—h'm, ah... yes! Well, wi' my job, I walk about the yards and count the stars and there's a plenty things go through my head in the night! I mind how things was once, before the tsar was deposed, and I mind the war, and I stand and I think to meself... what's this in our farm, wi' the stock? All the rest's going up, but the stock's going down. Where's the root o' the trouble? Why, just the leadership, that's my thought! Look at all the times our manager's changed! Dear souls! And not one of 'em a ha' porth o' good. We've got no luck wi' 'em at all, or maybe God's put a curse on us. There was Stepka Zhuravlyov—that son of a bitch, started dividing the milk money in half—half into the fund, and half into his own pocket. Well, we threw him out, sent him to court!

And then there was Faddei Kuzmich; he worked half a year and then he up and died. Well, peace to him, that can happen wi' anybody. Then after him there was Gavrll Otryzhkin. A thin, sickly fellow he was, but he got a good feed o' cream into him and started cutting capers. Gave the milkmaids no peace, no holding him. Every day there was rows, the husbands got jealous and gave the women hell. Well, so Otryzhkin was thrown out too. And after him there were three more, and all chips o' the same block—either they didn't know nothing, or they started some sort o' antics. Then at last our Nikita Patsyuk was given the job. Well, I thinks to myself, this one'll do. A Red Partisan, he was platoon commander in our detachment, I was one of his drivers. A man as was on in years, knew what he was about. Well, and what come of him? The old goat turned himself round and started going Otryzhkin's way!"

Abrosim Ivanovich thought for a moment.

"Mebbe it's not quite decent to be talking o' things o' yon sort here, but it's got to be said. If it didn't hurt the public weal, then the devil wi' him! But it's just because o' that the work's at sixes and sevens. . . And I thinks to meself—what's the root o' the bother, why do they all get the same way? Mebbe it's wi' not having enough to do—can't just get it right what are his functions as manager, and starts kicking about like a corn-fed horse in a stall, or mebbe it's that same milk—acts on 'em that way if they take too much on it? I dunno, I'm nearly seventy, and it doesn't act on me. I mind in 1900, now. . . ."

"Sh—Abrosim Ivanovich! Why d'ye want to go into all that?" Dyadyushkin interrupted him. "We don't need all the details. We all understand."

"All right. Put the brake on. . . What was I saying, then? Eh, plague take ye, threw me out. . . Aye, about Patsyuk. Well, it's this way, I can't rightly say the reason, but our Nikita Alexeyevich went the same road. In our village there was a woman, a speculator, she wasn't in the collective farm. Lizka Morgunova, and he, a Red Partisan, a collective farmer from 1929, he had to go and get mixed up wi' her! Well, could anything good come o' that? It got to fist fights. Right here, on the road afore the club. His wife, she went to fetch water in the evening, and there he was, saw him when he met Liza, and down wi' the yoke on his back. He tried to get away, got behind the fence, and she was after him and down wi' the bucket on his head. And it had water in it. Finished it off, the bucket, bent it all out o' shape. And all the folks round about peeping. . . Well, what sort of authority can he have after that? Comes to the farm and starts telling the milkmaids summat, what they should do, and they start: 'He-he, Nikita Alexeich! Got the bucket mended yet?' . . But d'ye think he learned his lesson from that! Nay, not he! Only now he gets away from the village. Always driving about—to look for a feedcutter to borrow, or a separator, he's heard there's one on sale somewhere—going after the widow, o' course. I know it all. The lads at Verbovoy tell me that when our Nikita Alexeich comes there, first thing he asks is, is his wife anywhere round? Is she here? Well, I'm main sorry, but ye can't make dirty sound clean. Mebbe I wouldn't have started telling on my old sergeant, but it's got so I've got to. Don't ye fuss him too much, Nastya, when he comes home late and tells ye that he's been away beyond Pasechny and he's starved to death—he's fed and warmed there wi' out your help."

A commotion rose in the front row where Patsyuk's wife was sitting. Nastya was trying to move, evidently wanting to get to the back where her husband was sitting, and those around were hindering her and trying to calm her. Elkin rapped with his pencil on the table, trying to get order. Granddad Chmelyov continued:

"Well, and yon's not all yet. The next was, our Nikita started drinking. Went to the dogs entirely. Like the old saying—drinks like he was expecting the Last Trump. Holidays, working days, all one to him. A gramophone, pickled cucumbers—that's all he needs. If he's told there's bullocks lost, them as went for hay got astray—well, he drinks to drown the trouble; when they're found, he drinks to celebrate; a cow dies, he drinks for the funeral, a calf's born—to christen it, and that's the way it goes—like a conveyor. And all the time on the section the cows is mucky, the feed's wasted, there's two trenches of it rotted—water got into it. The green feed's got frozen, calves have got diarrhea, the calves 'tendants got par'lyzed or summat—stands there in the sun propping up the gatepost wi' seeds sticking to their lip and hands in their pockets, and stand there spitting from morn to night. The darn son of a bitch, working like that! . . And our brigade leader at the commercial milk section—another o' the same make, Makar Chichkin—there he is, take a good look at him—the lazy good-for-nought. Mebbe ye'll try to deny it, Makar? Nay, ye can't, it's all God's truth and ye know it. A cow smashes the feed through—he'll wait for the carpenter a whole week, but ye'll never see him pick up an axe himself. 'Not my function,' he says. I told Patsyuk: 'Don't put Makar there, for the love o' God! He's neither fish nor flesh. You can't make any kind of both wi' him.' But he wouldn't listen. Mebbe he just liked a fellow as could down vodka as good as himself. . . A bit ago Comrade Abramenko spoke some words that our milkmaids hadn't even heard on—feed units and the like. But how are they to know 'em? Ye think there's meetings on our stock section, or courses, to teach the folks, tell 'em what and how? Nary a bit of it. No work wi' the people, just administration, as ye might say. Patsyuk and Chichkin look in for a minute in the morning, shout and kick up a row, and before ye've time to turn round they're off. Gone off together to buy a separator or set the gramophone going."

Abrosim Ivanovich glanced over his shoulder at Elkin.

"Isn't my time through yet? Can I say some more?"

Both the "Red Caucasus" farmers and the visitors unanimously answered for Elkin:

"Gie him more time!"

"Go on, Abrosim Ivanovich!"

"Well, all right, then. I wanted to tell ye of the mare Zorka. . . Because ye know, when

they pulled the tail off you bull, that was in our stock section. And it's allus the same way: whatever happens, it's where?—In the stock section. The wenches had a row—where?—ours. Wolves killed a foal—it's ours. A bull hurt—ours. Every day summat happening. What d'ye think they got into their heads, the sons o' bitches, Mitka Storozhenko and Vasyka Penkov? Tied two bulls by the tail, for a bet, which could pull t'other, and went at it till they pulled the tail off one o' the bulls. They ought 'a be sent to jail, the bastards! But that's nought, what I want to say is—where's the root o' the trouble? Where do they take their example? Why, from that same manager! He treats his beasts just as badly. He got the mare Zorka to use, ye all knew her, a young mare, full o' life, a grand beast! He got her because he was manager—take her and use her when ye've got to ride out somewhere, and take care of her. Well, and did he? Rode her ragged. Allus here and there in the villages, looking for a feed cutter, though the feed was packed away long ago, but still he kept on looking for that there cutter, then he'd come home and leave her saddled in the yard, or wi' his drunken eyes he'd tie her to a kennel or to the broom Nastya sweeps up the path wi'. And there'd be Zorka walking about the orchards all night dragging the broom after her, wi' her straps tangled and eating all sorts o' muck. And if I didn't see her and take her meself to the stable nobody'd raise a hand. I did it once, and another time, then she got drinking water when she was all of a lather, and that was the end o' Zorka. And what a grand mare she was!.. Eh, the bastards, the sons o' bitches, the black plague twist their bowels...."

Abrosim Ivanovich turned sharply and returned to his place.

"Are ye done, Granddad?" asked Elkin.

"I'm done. If yon mare wasn't dead, she could 'a' told ye more...."

The stableman Seryozha Zamyatin was to report on the care of the horses. He was a young fellow of twenty, a member of the Communist Youth League, and spoke fierily, almost shouting.

"In general, comrades, it works out this way—they look after the dead stock better than the livestock. Ye take no care o' your best friend, the horse! The rotten state o' things in the stock section, ye'll find its twin brother in the stables too. D'ye think the horses are going to be in good shape wi' the kind o' way ye feed them? They ought to be sleek as snakes! And I'll tell ye, the whole trouble's wi' the mangers. They're all too big, ye could get three bucketfuls into them. Ye need to cut them down so as they'll just hold a bucket—then there'll always be a fresh mixture and the horses'll eat better. The way it is, ye mix enough for a whole week at once, and it lies there and sours till it stinks! Nikolai Savelich! Take my advice—send carpenters tomorrow, and tell 'em to make small mangers—about this size, and ye'll see how your horses'll pick up... And now about grooming. You drivers, ye don't groom 'em properly. In the second brigade we found a pair o' horses—ye could have writ the drivers' names on their backs wi' your finger."

"And did ye groom 'em, Seryozha?" asked Kapiton Ivanovich.

"No, Uncle Kapiton," Sergei replied apologetically. "I didn't groom 'em. They wouldn't let me! I got such particular drivers, Petrenko and Artem Malyshev, they wouldn't let me touch the horses. 'Ye may be a commission,' they said, 'but ye've no right to touch our horses. Ye can tell us, but don't push in yourselves. We know, ye,' they said, 'afterwards ye'll go round the whole district boasting that ye came from the "Beacon" to groom the "Red Caucasus" horses!' Well what could I do—fight 'em? They groomed them right there in front o' me, and we let it go at that... Then in the second brigade there's yearlings, Maxim Budnik looks after 'em—it's a shame to look at 'em! Still got last year burs in their tails. And he tells me they don't let him clean 'em, kick out. Well, and what if they do? That's grand! It's a good horse when it breaks the hobbles. If he can't manage 'em alone, then let two of 'em clean 'em, and the right way, a brush on their sides and up and down! Eh, Maxim, call yourself a Cossack! Shall I stop wi' ye a day here, to teach ye how to groom a horse?.. Only don't ye take offence, comrades, self criticism helps man and horse."

Both the guests and the villagers applauded Zamyatin, and the band played a fanfare. Granddad Chmelyov cleared his throat and said:

"That's what ye do! Show off before other folks. They didn't play ought for me!"

"Kind o' awkward to play after you, Abrosim Ivanovich," the conductor answered, "Ye always end wi' swearing."

The meeting became noisy, jests were cracked and laughter flew from one to another. Elkin kept rapping the table with his pencil. By the time Kapiton Ivanovich had mounted the stage to sum up, the atmosphere had reached boiling point.

Kapiton Ivanovich, lean and dry, in his tight-waisted coat with the tall standing collar, stood for a minute twisting his moustaches, waiting for silence. The noise rolled back to the last rows and died down by the far wall.

"Well, we've talked of all kinds o' things," began Kapiton Ivanovich. "Forgive us if we've touched ye on some sore spots. But that's our job, that's why they sent us here, to help ye. Of course, it's true, ye see a mote in someone else's eye and don't mark a beam in your own. It's always that way. Well, never mind—ye'll be coming to us, and then ye can show us where we're wrong... Well, comrades, we've been working a year together. I think we can't decide the winner now, who's done better. We need outside folks for that, if we start sorting it out ourselves we'll be having rows. The district organization'll look after that—they'll inspect everything, check up and tell us. But all the same, let me say what I think—just my own opinion, not officially—the first place, of course, will still be ours."

"Whose?" Somebody at the back had not heard.

"Ours. Well, it's plain, it can't be any other way."

"Nothing plain about it!" the same voice retorted. "Things is much better wi' us now

than they was, Kapiton Ivanovich. This year we're giving ten kilograms of grain for a workday, and we've never done that before."

"Well, and what about it? We'll be giving ten too," Kapiton Ivanovich replied.

"Then we're equal."

"If we're equal, then we'll have to toss for it," came a proposal from some jester.

Elkin's fist crashed down on the table.

"Let's have a bit o' decency. Ye don't gie a man a chance to get a word out!"

"No need to toss," Kapiton Ivanovich replied calmly. "Ye can see without that. Workdays aren't everything, not by a long shot. Man does not live by bread alone. We've dropped all that—judging a collective farm by a kilogram. What's ten? Ye can give fifteen or twenty, for that matter. Don't build anything, don't set anything away to sell, and there's your twenty! Look what we've built this year! A stud farm with a hundred mares, a mill, a garage, a maternity home. And we've bought two new lorries. After the state deliveries[1], we sold eight thousand centners of corn to the cooperatives for the lorries and the building material! . . No, comrades, ye can't take a one-sided view like that—ten and ten, that means, equal. Ye've got to look at the farm, all branches of it, and then ye'll get it right. And if ye take all branches, then of course ours is as far from yours as heaven from earth! Can't get away from it! We're racing ahead, as ye might put it, with three horses pulling us, and wi' led ones fastened on—orchards, vegetables, bees, and poultry. And ye've just harnessed one old nag and jog along. Pulled by your field work and that's all. And if anything happens—hail or drought—then it's all done for. No grain, no money. Right? The only other thing ye have, that's the stock section and that's just a joke. All our stockmen have been sent for to the district centre to get their papers in order for the Agricultural Exhibition in Moscow, while yours—they'll be in court one of these days. . . ."

"Kapiton Ivanovich! Don't ye believe it!" Patsyuk could stand no more. "All the slander they've talked about me here, one head won't hold it all. And the hay right under the roof as if I was some sort o' wrecker!"

"Nikita!" rasped Elkin. "Have I given ye the floor? Haven' ye any patience?"

"That chairman of yours as was taken off," Kapiton Ivanovich continued, "he was one of the sort that don't like to stir themselves too much, or work too hard. What did the district centre demand from the collective farm leaders? Sowing, weeding, harvesting. Well, and that was all he bothered about—what he had to do, but as for doing anything on his own—God forbid! Extra bother. If ye start wi' geese, ducks, then ye've got to look after them, damn 'em, or they get some sickness and die off and then ye've to answer for it. And it looks like he taught ye the same ways. Well, maybe now Nikolai Savelich is doing something a bit different?"

"Yes, we've started a thing or two," replied Dyadyushkin. "We're buying a hundred hives of bees from the "Friendship Farm", and we've an agreement with the nurseries for vine cuttings."

"Good! When ye've got more o' them sort o' things going, then we can talk about first place. But for the present there's no sense in getting excited and heat up. Well. . . And about your field work, comrades, I wanted to say a word too. This year there was a good harvest, but don't get the idea that everything's so fine and grand there either. Today we were in all the brigades, got the group leaders and brigade leaders together and talked to them. Checked up on' em good and proper, as another neighbouring farm did wi' us not so long ago. The folks of that farm asked our group leader: 'Who was Timiryazev? Who was Wilyams? Who was Darwin? And what did they teach?' Well, what d'ye think—ye only need to plough straight and sow on time?—that's agrotechnics of ten thousand years ago. Time to get some science, and get it right. I don't want to boast, but I can tell ye that we've got all that going very well. I'm head of the laboratory, and I see after it myself, get the folks together, invite agronomists. There's lessons four times a week. It's obligatory—for brigade leaders and group leaders and members of the administration. And no excuses—neither family nor age. We sit there at desks like school kids wi' our exercise books and pencils. And then, o' course, we put it all into practice. We checked you the same way today. Well, o' course, the mice has eaten all your laboratory and there's only dust left o' the exhibits. And looks as if they've ate the manager an' all—never a sign of him—gone off to the mountains to get wood. Suppose ye think that's a job along his line? That's to your charge, Nikolai Savelich, it started before your time, that's true, but ye ought to have given heed to it. Well, if the laboratory's not working, then it's plain there's no study. I thought, maybe the folks do a bit o' reading themselves, take an interest in it, like, and I began asking some of 'em—but nary a sign of it. There's Comrade Elkin, here, he set us laughing till we nearly bust. 'Darwin,' says he, 'that's the commander-in-chief o' the French army.'"

"That's not right!" Elkin jumped up. "I never said that!"

Now it was the turn of the collective farmers to calm Elkin:

"Order, order, Semyon Trofimovich! Don't interrupt!"

"Ye're chairman!"

"Upsetting order yourself!"

"Keep cool!" Dyadyushkin called to him. "Keep cool!"

"But how can I keep cool when it isn't right? I didn't say that about the commander-in-chief!"

"What did ye say, then?" said Kapiton Ivanovich, bending over him.

"I said our bookkeeper. They've got the same sounding names—that was Darwin, and our bookkeeper was Barwin."

"Quite right, I apologize, I was mistaken," said Kapiton Ivanovich. "It was brigade leader Dushkin with the commander-in-chief—old soldier's habit, get it wrong, but say something. But you too, Semyon Trofimych, ye were bad enough too! A world renowned sci-

[1] A certain amount sold to the state at a fixed price. The remainder is at the disposal of the collective farmers.

entist, and get him mixed up wi' a village bookkeeper! Of course, bookkeepers are necessary too, but all the same, if the old man could have heard it, he'd have turned in his grave. . . No good, no good, Comrade Elkin! When I look at ye I think to myself, not moved a step forward, why's that? The way I knew ye when collectivization was new, that's the way ye still are. Even the same cap ye wore when we collected the horses for common use. Remember how the girls tormented ye there by the mill, threw your boots into the well, and your cap into the tar pit? Ye cleaned it wi' petrol after, it was new then. . . How did ye lead your brigade in them days, Comrade Elkin? Gave orders, went through the stables nights, saw the weeding knives were sharp. And how do ye lead it now? See the weeding knives are sharp, give orders—just the same. Haven't ye got anything more in these ten years? And the Efremovites?[1] That doesn't concern ye, eh? There's those two record groups, undertook obligations, well, let them get on wi' it and worry about how to do it all—nothing to do wi' me, I've no time, got to hand out orders. If that's the way ye think, it's no good! No wonder the group leaders grouse about ye, say ye put a brake on their work! If they ask for carts to bring in manure to the steppe, ye just swear at 'em. Got all their harvest result figures mixed. Folks worked and worked, each one wanted to show what he could do, and ye made it all wi'out a name. I suppose it seemed to you that that was something extra, not your job, too? Experimental plots, harvest results—what's all that, who thought it up? That's how it is. And the same wi' your other brigades. Wi' Dushkin it's worse yet—not one single hectare manured! But our farm, comrades, half the sown area's under manure ready for next year. Looks like ye've a long way to go yet for first place. Three hundred hectares of winter grain sown Efremov style—criss-cross. And you wi' nothing. Maybe ye've heard of the Efremov agrotechnique—ye must have heard of it, can't have missed it—but ye didn't pay any attention. Talked and talked, and that was the end of it, but ye weren't risking trying it out. Nay, that's no good at all!"

Elkin was squirming in his seat.

"How can ye compare us, Kapiton Ivanovich?" he said, with a wry smile. "You're in a big village, nearly a capital, and we're a hamlet. Living here at the back o' beyond, as dumb as a bull."

"Now don't ye make yourselves out worse than ye are, Comrade Elkin! What's a hamlet got to do with it? Ye can go to seed in a capital worse than in a hamlet. Nay, it's something else here. . . I'll tell it ye straight, only don't go getting offended. Ye've come here today to a meeting, to a public place, and what are ye looking like? All grease, as if ye'd been wiping the bottom o' a tractor, not shaved, and your shirt hanging out. And then start bragging of ten kilograms! What d'ye think to do wi' 'em? Just take a look at our brigade leader, Andrei Savelich. A real Jigit.[1] Why can't ye look like that? If ye don't like the Cossack dress, then put on a jacket and tie. Eh, Comrade Elkin! Culture starts wi' yourself. Take my word for it—ye're getting none such a bad harvest in your brigade now, but if ye only tuck in your shirt and throw away that swagger calfskin cap it'll be better yet."

The confused Elkin actually did remove his "fur" cap, the top of which had lost all its hair with age and was rubbed like the sides of a sheep with the itch, and after turning it round and round in his hands, laid it on the table in front of him.

All the window panes in the club rang with laughter.

". . . Well, what else shall I say to ye, comrades? It works out that your weakest spot is culture. Got to do something about that."

"Next time ye come all the brigade leaders'll be wearing ties," said Dyadyushkin smiling. "We'll buy 'em and charge 'em up to you. And a special order from the administration to wear 'em. Like in the army—orders for the garrison."

"We'll see! . . Got to get studies going. Open a farm school, like we've got. Mind, comrades, if ye don't study, ye'll find yourself left behind. And it's bad to be lagging! The leading farms, they write about 'em in the papers, the kids read about their fathers and mothers, what heroes they are, the girls are glad to marry fellows from farms like that, folks go to Moscow—people respect 'em. But the laggers—all the chickens peck at 'em. . . One more thing I wanted to say, comrades, about your stockfarming, a bit of advice so ye can get it going better. I'm not going to say aught o' Nikita, there's been enough already, I guess he's sweated till his boots are full. And of course it's all pretty bad. I knew him when he was a real fellow, wi' something in him—I tramped the Astrakhan sand wi' him. Seems like he's got spoilt. Well, there's medicine for that sort o' sickness too. Abrosim Ivanovich said a true word here about functions, they can't work out rightly what their functions are. Each section's got its own head as it is—the brigade leader, and then there's this manager for the whole stock branch. I'd advise ye to cut out that post—stock section manager. Get the right men on each of the sections, and leave it at that. Let them be directly under the collective farm administration, and it wouldn't do any harm if the chairman himself paid more attention to it. We've done that long ago. We've got no stock section manager. The stock brigade leaders answer for their own branches and look after it all themselves, they've got their own carts, get everything they need themselves, and of course if they're in a fix, then they come to the central office."

"What's it ye're advising, then, Kapiton Ivanovich?" asked Granddad Chmelyov, rising. "Ye're wanting to do away wi' Nikita?"

"Do away wi' his job."

"Altogether?"

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[1] Innovators in agriculture, following a method named after its discoverer.

[1] Cossack horsemen—who take great pride in their appearance.

"Altogether."

"So there's no manager?"

"Yes, that's it."

"Aye, it'll be better that way," agreed one of the collective farmers.

"So our Nikita'll be like a minister wi'out portfolio?" continued the irrepressible Granddad Chmelyov. "What'll we do wi' him, then?"

"What? Well, ye can always send him to a brigade working on the steppe, even if it's only for a time. That 'ud help. There the functions are plain and there's no time to play the fool. We had something like that last year wi' our superintendant Katrich. He got spoilt, drank day in, day out, got thin wi' it and yellow, and hoarse as a crow. Well, they took him off and sent him to a sowing brigade. He worked out there in the fresh air a bit, and the wind blew it all out of him. In a month we weighed him and he'd put on eight kilograms. Good as a health resort. He stopped drinking. And he'd been right on the way to the dogs. Now he's been made superintendant again."

More laughter and a general movement as people turned to Patsyuk.

"Nikita Alexeich's day today!"

"And he's got it coming at home too, poor chap!"

"Well, that's about all, comrades," Kapiton Ivanovich concluded. "Seems like we've taken everything in. If there's any questions let's have 'em. To end up, we've brought you Bolshevik greetings from the farm ye're competing wi', the 'Beacon of the Revolution,' and wishes for your success. But o' course, ye've as much chance of getting the banner as ye have o' seeing your own ears."

The band had been preparing to play a fanfare, but Kapiton Ivanovich's last words took the conductor aback—could they give musical applause to such an attack on their farm? He glanced enquiringly at his chairman.

"Get on with it!" Dyadyushkin's wave of the hand indicated. "Can't be helped—guests—got to show them respect."

Music rolled, applause rattled. Elkin, red and sweating beside the hot paraffin lamp, clapped the loudest of all, with a look of great concentration.

Kapiton Ivanovich's speech was followed by a general discussion, with both "Red Caucasus" farmers and others among the guests who had not yet spoken, participating. The meeting continued until late, a stormy, extraordinary meeting.

Pasha Kulkova, a group leader from the "Beacon", made mincemeat of the brigade leaders.

"Your group leaders seem a spineless lot. Got their harvest results mixed, and they stand for it. If it had been our lasses, they'd 'a' set about 'em wi' their fists, sure as I live they would! What way's yon—work a year, put your back in it, and then have it all lumped together wi' some lazy good-for-nothing! I'd like to see a brigade leader try not to gie me my results when I got the manure in on time according to my agronomic rules! I'd 'a' pulled him out o' bed at night and told him—put in the horses and get it in yourself, or I'll scratch your eyes out?"

"Nay, Pasha girl!" replied Arina Ryabukhina, a group leader from Elkin's brigade. "It's not because we've got no backbone, but it's our brigade leaders are such thickheads ye' can't hammer it in! Got hold o' one idea—with combine harvesters ye can't measure the harvest by groups—and that's all! Why can't ye? I tell ye, Comrade Elkin, there's only one thing's impossible, and that's to put on your trousers over your head, and anything else ye can do. Ye can stand the containers so that the bunker empties into 'em just on the border, or ye can plan the sections different, so as not to split a crop in five or six hectares—one group do all the clover, another all the sunflowers. And wi' the grains ye can check the harvest by the stacks. They just don't want the trouble... Here's the way Elkin served me wi' my experimental plot. I'd got sunflowers on manganese ore—I'd worked out the experiment wi' our laboratory manager—three plots on ore, three for control. Well, me sunflowers come up and nobody's ever seen the like. Stalks thick as your arm, heads like umbrellas! And what d'ye think he did? Sent that combine and cut 'em all at once. And them plots, we'd 'a' cut 'em by hand in an hour! I could see 'em at it where I was, I ran three kilometres from the camp, me heart was in me mouth, I couldn't breathe, me knees was giving way. I started waving me kerchief and I stopped the combine, but it was too late, they'd finished and the seed was all mixed in the bunkers... 'What ha' ye done, Semyon Trofimych?' I says to him. 'Ye'd 'a' done better to cut me down along wi' the sunflower.' And it's that way all the time...."

"An' I'd put it another way, Arisha," added the group leader Pelageya Markova from Dushkin's brigade. "What should they want to keep our harvest results separate for? Just ye look and ye'll see how it goes—the eighth group's the most behind, and look who's in it. There was the brigade leader's wife, our former chairman's wife, and manager Yurchenko's and the controller's. They'd come out to the field when the sun'd had breakfast and go home before it 'ud hardly turned round for dinner. Wolves howling in the maize, the sunflower fields were left unweeded, and the flowers shot up till they were thin as a thread and drooping. If they'd reckoned workdays by the harvest, they'd not have earned a waistcoat sleeve! So we're carrying 'em on our backs."

"And yon's a true word Polya's spoke!" shouted the collective farmers from the best groups.

"Our workdays are going to feed the lazy good-for-nothings!"

Maxim Petrovich Dronov had no talent for broad generalizations. He dealt with individual instances of disorder.

"Mikhailo Potapovich! Ye said that all their machinery was in good order, they'd put the farm on wheels, but their harness is no good at all. We looked at it, and we found they was all driving wi' ropes. I asked 'em, 'Ain't ye got any leather?' 'Got it,' they told me. 'And ye got harness makers?'

"Got 'em,' they says. Then why don't they make new harness? Or maybe ye've got harness makers as is scared to cut leather for fear o' spoiling it?"

Now the "Red Caucasus" harness maker, Fyodor Kravchuk, jumped up.

"An' what about your harness? Drop it, Maxim Petrovich, ye needn't brag! I seen your harness when I came to the mill—traces made o' guts, bits o' bast and reins o' wick! A fine thriving lot!"

"Mebbe there's one like yon on the whole farm and ye saw just that one!"

"There was three teams o' yours at the mill and they was all the same!"

"Hey, Maxim Petrovich! Looks like ye've got nothing to boast of, an' all!"

"Looks like it's quits, then!" laughed somebody. "Ours is rope, yours is bast!"

"Account settled!"

"No, accounts aren't settled that way," Chairman Dyadyushkin corrected them. "We can't let it go at that, if we've found a competitor's weak spot. One weak spot, another weak spot, and quits. That's no good! We'll be quits when both them and us have got horses like lions, Don Cossacks and English-Cossack crossbreeds; harness shining like sunshine; a hundred centner harvest; mountains o' vegetables and fruit! Then we can say we've settled accounts."

The brigade leaders having been dealt with, Pasha Kulkova now turned her attention to the manager.

"Ivan Grigoryevich! What's your views—your job's just to look into the smithy where they're repairing the machinery, and get supplies o' fuel? Ye don't think ye need to bother your head about the folks at all? That's none o' your business? D'ye know how your Stakhanovites live?"

"What's all that? I don't know nothing. Ye needn't go for me too much, Pasha, it's not two months I've had the job."

"That's nought! Ye haven't just got in from America! Ye live here, ye can see it all. How d'ye reckon Frosya Petrenkova?"

"How? A Stakhanovite."

"The best Stakhanovite! I competed wi' her in the summer, I was in her brigade, I saw her clover. If ye hadn't mixed up all the harvest results, she and her group 'ud 'a' gone to the exhibition in Moscow! And how did ye treat her? Ye know and ye know well what her family's like—just her and an old mother, no menfolk—ought to be helping her. The cottage leaks, wind's torn the thatch, the shed's tumbling down, and there's nowhere to put the cow. What's wrong wi' ye, comrades—got no straw for a roof, nothing to make a shed wi'? I'd never stand that! I'd 'a' gone ,to the superintendant's house or the chairman's, I'd 'a' told 'em. 'Ye go and live in mine, better have it dripping down your neck if ye're the sort that doesn't give mind to Stakhanovites!'. . ."

Now Abrosim Ivanovich Chmelyov rose again.

"I agree wi' every word the commission spoke about our faults. It's a hundred per cent right! This is the kind o' meeting that's to my mind. And Stepanovna spoke right, and Sergei—what's your name?—Vassilich, he's a young lad, but he got the right idea why our horses are thin. And about the harness, what Maxim Petrovich said, that's right too. What's the good o' denying it? There's leather lying and rotting, and we're driving wi' the devil knows what. A bit more and we'll be tying the brichkas to the horses' tails. Well, and Kapiton Ivanovich, he hits the nail on the head. Clear as daylight! I'll sign all he said. . . Only there's one thing where I'm not wi' him. . . How could ye say the word, Kapiton Ivanovich, don't bother about being first? As I see it, that's summat I can't stomach. What's that, not worry about it? Is there anyone on God's earth that doesn't want to be the best? Ye set us pretty low, lashed us right at the roots, ye might say. What d'ye think, ye want us always to be hearing things at meetings like we heard today? That's a bad wish from ye! But what I says is just the opposite . . . ye'll see the time when folks'll come here to praise us and gie us the rewards. Aye! Can't be any other way! O' course, if ye look at us now, our collective farm's well 'ahind yours along o' the bad management and just plain carelessness. Well, what about it? The U.S.S.R. was behind the capitalist countries at first too. But hasn't it caught 'em up? What did Comrade Stalin say—a hundred years behind 'em, and got to catch up in ten. And we'll put our backs into it and in a year we'll be up wi' ye and past ye, or if not in one year then in two at the most!"

The collective farmers agreed with one voice.

"That's right!"

"They'd better not go to sleep, and keep their eyes skinned or we'll soon be treading on their heels!"

"Our folks know how to work all right, if they've got right management!"

"We'll catch 'em up!"

This time the band greeted Granddad with a fanfare.

"And there's another thing that's not to my mind—why've they made me watchman?" Chmelyov continued. "How many's the time I've told the old chairman, and now I'm telling ye, Nikolai Savelich, in front o' all the folks, right here. . . I'm not being watchman longer nor spring. So mind. The devil! I'm sick and tired o' yon job, counting the stars. I'm not halt or lame yet. Seek someone else for the job—someone really old and past ought else, and I'm going to a brigade. I'll get me a group o' old 'uns an we'll gie 'em a taste o' what we can do. And I'd like to see any of 'em mixing up my work wi' someone else's, or mixing the plots or summat—I'll mix him so he'll be telling his grandsons not to touch the old 'uns!"

Brigadier Elkin could only make a very apologetic speech. And it was heartfelt, for he had come to feel and understand a great deal at this meeting. His cap was off, and off for good—choosing his moment when attention was drawn to something else, he had quietly thrown it under the table that it might not offend the eye, and had buttoned up the neck of his shirt and put himself to rights.

"I gie ye my word, Comrades Women, it won't happen again!" he said, his clenched fists pressed to his heart. "Them as doesn't work never makes a mistake. Doing any

damn thing, but no agrotechnics. Ye just grind flour and clean harness. But now I'm going to make it that first of all I think about you, the Stakhanovite groups. This year we'll reckon the harvest, each crop separately and each group separately, down to the last stook! Tomorrow I'll send three carts to the station for su... superfof... damn it, can't get the blamed word out!.. super-phosphate! And let's agree on this—the devil take him who rakes up the past. And about the courses, I've nought against it...."

Only Patsyuk was silent.

At the end of the meeting Nikolai Savelich Dyadyushkin took the floor.

"Well, who was that that spoke to me about the bathhouse yesterday? You, Ivan Grigoryevich, wasn't it? Well, we've been given a bath—all of us. I told ye when I took over, and you 'specially, Nikita Alexeyevich—that's no way to be working. Some day the farmers'll call ye to account and then ye'll sweat. Well, never mind. We need checkups like this oftener. We thank ye, Comrades 'Beacons,' for the criticism. Give 'em our greetings at home and say we were all well satisfied, especially some o' the leaders. And that includes the chairman. Yes, I mean it I'm not going to make any excuses for myself, comrades. That I haven't been chairman long—that's no justification. How's it in the army? A commander takes over a unit, he's not given long to get the hang of it, it may be an hour or two and he may be going into battle. There's plenty o' things I've let slip too. It's just, as ye might say, I didn't reckon out rightly what to start with. Take, for example, study courses, those could have been started long ago, o' course. And the same wi' the laboratory. Well, that's enough, or I'll be starting to make excuses. And that's not the way to do. And I don't advise any o' ye to be trying it either. That's not what we've come here for, that they put a screw in where we're weak and we take it out again. I hope it's in and stops in. There's only one thing to be said: have we worked badly? Yes, we have. Can we work better, what d'ye think?"

"O' course we can!"

"Arisha said right—only one thing's impossible—put on your breeches over your head!"

"Is it in our power to make the farm like Abrosim Ivanovich said—so as folks'll come to see us and learn from us? What d'ye say, Comrades Collective Farmers?"

"O' course it is! We'll do it!"

"Who'll want to come here to do our work for us?"

"Well, that's all then. Army style, short and clear. Close the meeting, Comrade Elkin. And about Patsyuk, and those two tail twisters Storchenko and Penkov, and all the rest o' the advice we've had here, we'll settle all that at the next meeting, on Sunday. It's late now and it's a serious question, if we're in haste we'll not get it right. Kapiton Ivanovich! That means on Sunday we'll not be coming to you, we'll be busy with our own matters. Give us a little time to get things straight. We'll come after the New Year. And then, you watch out! We'll send Abrosim Ivanovich, Kandeyev, Semyon Trofimych, all the group leaders, and I'll come myself. And we'll check ye good and proper! Kandeyev'll twist all the bolts on the seeders for ye. We'll bring food with us and stop three days and go through every cottage..." Dyadyushkin stopped and picked up Elkin's cap from under the table—"And we won't leave ye till we've got this top hat full of your slips!..."

From the fanfare the band went over into a Gopak[1]. The hour was late, but tradition demanded dancing after every meeting in the club.

"Eh, cut your capers, step it out, tails up!" shouted Kapiton Ivanovich. "Sergei! Up and show 'em how to do it!"

Sergei came out into the circle, his Kuban cap on the back of his head. The village girls pushed the milkmaid Ksyusha Kovalyova out opposite him, a tall, strongly-built girl, rather heavy, but tireless in the dance. And now another pair leaped out—the blacksmith Kandeyev and Motya Serdyukova. This was the beginning of a contest in skill and ingenuity, of every possible intricate step.

"A wider circle!"

Kapiton Ivanovich could hold back no longer, he seized Nastya Patsyuk by the hand, pulled her out of the crowd, and joined the dancers.

"Don't be down in the mouth, Nastya! It's a tough business, but it will turn out all right in the end!"

Nastya decided to postpone the reckoning with Nikita till they got home, and danced with a will, not sparing her heels.

Granddad Chmelyov, his shoulders moving in the old style, circled twice with Pasha Kulkova.

"There's a fine couple!" laughed the farmers.

"Fit each other well—in character!"

There was a call for the band to play "Suffering".

"Gie us 'Suffering!'" shouted Sergei, and without a pause passed over into the slower tempo of the new dance.

"Suffering" is accompanied by singing.

"What is ye're proud of lad,
Where've ye shown ye're able?"

began Ksyusha Kovalyova, dancing on the spot opposite Sergei.

"Ye're no good in the brigade.
No good in the stable,"

Sergei caught her up, hands thrown out, his heels beating a tattoo on the floor.

There was general applause.

"They got it grand!"

"Open up the window, Mother,
Just a tiny bit,"

Ksyusha began.

"Let me go out for this evening,
Walk around and sit,"

Sergei concluded the rhyme.

"Eh, lads, they're o' one mind?"

"What d'ye think? They're one i' the dance too."

... Fyodor Malyuk, the driver, stood for a little while in the circle round the dancers and then went out to the lorry. Outside the snow lay thick, and the air was filled with a frosty silence. The blizzard had blown over,

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[1] Ukrainian national dance.

the sky had cleared, and arched over the village dark and star-filled. Fedya brushed the snow off the hood and the step of the lorry with a spare bench that he found in the club porch, and let down the side—the body was also filled with snow. When it was clean, he took out the bucket, went to the well and began to fill the radiator.

. . . Music was ringing, the young folks were dancing. . . .

Aside in a corner, by the wall, the Dyadyushkin brothers were standing, one in his Cossack coat, the other in an army greatcoat. Andrei Savelich—ten years older than Nikolai, had a touch of grey on his temples and on his moustache, but Nikolai too was no boy. Before being called up he had been a collective farm brigade leader, and now he had served four years in the army. He was taller than his brother and broader.

"Ye're doing right, Kolya!" said Andrei Savelich. "Go on that way. And the main thing is, don't let them make excuses. Maybe our folks went a bit too far, but never mind. That's not bad. What the greedy pike is to the small fish, competition is to us—the managers mustn't be caught napping. If ye go on this way, ye'll get things going."

Nikolai grinned broadly.

"Yes, I think they'll go. . . Why shouldn't they? Our folks are good too. But all the same, I'm planning to catch up wi' ye. Eh? Not at once, o' course, but in a year or two, say. . ."

"Well, good luck to ye. . . ."

"And I think we'll make Granddad manager of the commercial milk branch," said Nikolai. "What d'ye think about that, Andrei? He can't take a group, of course, that 'ud be too much for his years, it's not for him to be stooping over a hoe, but he'll manage the branch. If a man wants to go on working, why not? The old 'un's literate. Of course, his language's a bit salty times, but we'll warn him."

"Yes, I guess he'd do for the commercial milk branch. That's not so bad. And if he starts, he'll make 'em dance. And the main thing, no need to be feared o' the milk having that effect on him. . . ."

Both brothers laughed, glancing at Abrosim Ivanovich, who was now circling with Vassilissa Abramenko.

The two group leaders, Pasha Kulkova and Frosya Petrenkova, who were friends, were resting on the steps leading to the stage, their arms about each other.

"Mind ye come to us, Frosya, when your folks come," said Pasha. "Mind. Ask them to send ye."

"I'll come. . . Well, Pasha, so you and I'll be competing again? If we could go to the exhibition together! . . Eh, Pasha, ye don't know how I want our groups to be better than yours! Just a teeny bit better. Or the same. . . Ye're not angry wi' me, Pasha?"

"Ye ninny!" laughed Pasha and embraced her friend.

While the meeting was going on, Granddad Shtanko and his crony Onisim Fyodorovich Pshonkin, an ancient, shaky Cossack like himself, had disappeared from the club several times. His old friend lived nearby, and they had gone to take a nip. Now they were sitting on a bench in the middle of the hall watching the dancers and talking loudly, to make themselves heard above the music.

"Aye!" said Granddad Shtanko. "See how they argy, how they check? And who are they checking? Themselves—Andryushka Savkin, Mishka Korzhov. That means it's got into their blood! . . ."

"Eh, it was allus that way," answered Granddad Pshonkin, after ruminating. "If a man built hisself a cottage wi' three winders on the street, then his neighbour'd put up one wi' four. One 'ud buy a stallion from the Nikolayev place, and another's look for a better one, a blood 'un. . . Only it didn't allus come out. A stallion 'ud die and hail 'ud cut down the grain, and then he'd have to go and work for the neighbour. . . ."

The two old men sat in silence for a long time.

"D'ye mind yon mechanic at the Mazurenkov mill," Granddad Shtanko began again, "in the old times it was, what did they call him?"

"Kudrya," his friend put in.

"Aye, that's it, Kudrya! Ye mind, times ten or so of us would come to the furnace room to him, and he'd start talking to us. Told us there'd be a time when there'd be no tsar and no amperors and the people'ud own all, the land 'ud be everybody's as God made it, neither to buy nor to sell. Everything 'ud be for the people. Well, and some on us believed him and some didn't. And them as believed him, they was all this way and that. If it'll be like that, they says, it'll be a long time yet. Mebbe in a thousand years. Eh, and ye see how it's all come out! And we've lived to see it, old friend!"

"Aye, we've lived to see it. . . ."

A pause.

"Well, how d'ye think?" Pshonkin suggested. "Mebbe we'll go and have another while they're dancing?"

"How'll we do it? Is there time?"

"We'll have time enough!"

Holding on to each other, the old men walked unsteadily to the door. They were followed by Patsyuk—dirty, with his bald head and long moustaches. Jostling Dronov with his shoulder in the crowd, he threw out at him angrily:

"Ye'd no right to set about me like that, Maxim Petrovich. It's six yards from the roof. And the roof's an iron one, what could happen to it?"

"Don't be too sure of your iron, Nikita Alexeyich," replied Dronov. "I've seen iron glowing too. And wi' a good wind like we had today, six yards isn't that much."

In the doorway Patsyuk collided with Chichkin, the brigade leader on the commercial milk section, who was going out for a smoke.

"Listen, Makar!" said Patsyuk. "Have ye got forks on the farm?"

"Yes, five three-pronged ones and two new ones wi' a tongue," Chichkin answered, looking at Patsyuk in perplexity.

"Well, come on, then."

"Where?"

"Come on!" Patsyuk was tugging at his sleeve. Shrugging his shoulders, Chichkin followed him.

As the lorry turned in the road, its headlights shone in through the windows of the club.

"Time to go, comrades!" shouted Kapiton Ivanovich. "Et and drunk and seen our sweethearts—time for home!"

The music died down, and the club emptied. The "Beacons" said goodbye to the villagers and took their places in the lorry.

"But where's Granddad Shtanko?" asked Kapiton Ivanovich. "Stop, stop—Fedya! We've lost Granddad. Where's he got to? Eh, he must be at Pshonkin's. Sergei, off ye go and look for him!"

"Stop a bit," Korzhov halted Sergei. "They're coming."

The sound of wavering, drunken singing carried from Pshonkin's yard. It was two trembling, aged voices. "I'll sit at my window and look out for the Black Sea sailor." A moment later the singers appeared round the corner. The old cronies were wandering along, arms round each other. Pshonkin without a cap, and Granddad Shtanko dragging through the snow the towel his old wife had tied round him.

"We'd time, we had!" Granddad Shtanko cried joyfully, as he saw the lorry.

"Aye, we managed it," Pshonkin echoed. Shtanko began singing again, Pshonkin accompanying him in a deep tuneless bass.

"Here he comes, the Black Sea sailor,
Leading with him a pair of horses."

"H'm! There's one we didn't look after!" said Kapiton Ivanovich.

"Eh, lads, dear lads!" Grandad Shtanko implored. "Don't throw me off. I'm coming home. There's my Froska there, Frosichka!"

"All right, all right, we won't throw ye off, we'll take ye to Frosya. Only on one condition—don't ye start dancing in the lorry. Get him in."

Again Korzhov lifted the ancient over the side of the lorry.

"Put him in the middle. That's the way. Fasten his collar and hold his legs all the way. I know him, he may start cutting capers now."

"Is that all?" Kapiton Ivanovich looked round the lorry. "One, two, three, four, eight, ten, fifteen, eighteen, twenty, twenty-one... Yes, all here. Well, all good wishes, comrades!"

"Good journey!"

"Tell your driver to hug the slope in Rebrovy valley, the snow'll have drifted there!"

"Ye're in luck! Came here in summer, going back in winter!"

"Goodbye! Live well, get rich and grow fat!" Kapiton Ivanovich bent over the side to shake hands with the collective farmers. "Now what good wish shall I gie ye in parting? I'll wish your wives as many sons as there's stumps in the woods, as many daughters as there's humps in the bog! And in general, a thousand bulls and five hundred merinos, bellowing when they go to the stream and kicking when they come back, and everything clean, and all tails in their places, and all washed down like ours. Goodbye to ye, don't bear us a grudge! We'll be expecting ye!"

"Goodbye!"

"Goodbye, Abrosim Ivanovich! So if the mare hadn't died she could 'a' told us some more?"

"Aye, and so much it 'ud 'a' taken all night! Goodbye, and thanks for coming!"

"Goodbye, Ma!"

"Goodbye, Daughter! Here, take this shawl, put it round Fedyushka's feet."

"Heh! Old Campaigner! Akim Fedotych! Goodbye!"

"Goodbye! Gie my love to Pyotr!"

The lorry started, making the first tracks in the snow blanketing the village. For a long time the red tail lamp could be seen in the darkness, before it disappeared along the road.

The collective farmers dispersed to their homes. Only the manager and the brigade leaders remained with Nikolai Savelich on the porch of the club, awaiting instructions for the next day. It was pleasant in the fresh air, after the stuffy, tobacco-filled room. Frost nipped their cheeks, and the snow crunched crisply under their boots on the steps. A sickle moon was rising over the barns, and the last clouds drifted down to the distant horizon.

Dyadyushkin was giving instructions—how many carts from each brigade to be sent to the station for fuel and mineral fertilizer, how many to be sent to the mountains for wood, where the people should go—part to the barns to shell the maize, part to prepare grain at the mill, three of Dushkin's brigade for straw, and to thatch Petrenkova's roof the next day. Clearing the snow from the railing with the skirt of his greatcoat, Dyadyushkin wrote a note to the manager of the laboratory, Matvei Spitsin, who had been sent to cut wood—which was not his job. Butenko was puffing at his cigarette to light up the notebook.

"Give it to one o' them going to the mountains," and Dyadyushkin gave the note to the manager. "Get him home. Ye can send Yurchenko in his place."

Then they discussed the weather. The snow had come early, each brigade would have to prepare another couple of sledges. If the snow track was ready by that time they would be able to get the wood from the mountains very quickly....

"Nikolai Savelich!" said Butenko. "I sent the girls to the bathhouse today all the same, they cleaned it out and heated it. The water ought to be hot yet, they heated it in the evening. What about going there? None so bad to freshen up before sleep. Eh, my head's racking. It's always like that—sit to midnight, and can't get to sleep."

"To the bathhouse?" Dyadyushkin smiled. "Heated it, ye say?.. Aye, we've got the right kind o' company for that. All them as got plastered at the meeting. We only need Patsyuk to fill the count. He's the one as sweated most today. Patsyuk here?"

"Nay, he's not here, he's gone," Elkin answered.

"He was asking Chichkin something about forks," said brigade leader Dushkin. "'Ha' ye forks on the farm?' he asked. They've gone to get the hay away from the cowshed."

"Eh?"

"That's right. Ye'll see, that's the way it is."

"There's a job he's taken on!"

"Well, it's all one to him—if only he doesn't have to go home, till Nastya's cooled down a mite."

"Aye, that's right. She'll be cracking his head again. There's a hellcat for ye!"

"Ye see how it is these days, Nikolai Savelich," said Dushkin. "If the husband beats his wife, then to court wi' him, but if the wife beats her husband, that's all right. He won't go to complain that his wife's beat him. So the wives get away with it."

Nikolai Savelich made no reply to Dushkin but asked Butenko for a cigarette, lit up, then suddenly choked on the smoke and began to laugh till the tears flowed. At the meeting, as chairman, he had been forced to restrain himself, but now he could let his feelings out freely. And looking at him, the brigade leaders laughed too.

"Eh, ye got it all right! Elkin! Got ye chalked up all right! Only one thing, Semyon Trofimich beat them all at this harvest business, so that they won't poke fun at you any more. . . And Granddad! He found where the trouble lay all right! The way he gave it to Patsyuk, in front o' his wife and all the folks! I could ha' split!"

"I was thinking Nastya would get at him," said Dushkin. "Might ha' been a big row. It was risky, might ha' upset the whole meeting."

For a long time the men's hearty laughter rang out in the frosty air.

"Well, what d'ye say, Ivan Grigorich, a bath, eh?" said Dyadyushkin, wiping away the tears with his greatcoat sleeve. "Isn't it too late? But it wouldn't be bad to steam out. Better get some clean clothes, eh? Or just the way we are? The 'Beacons' 'ud laugh if they knew, eh? Eh, them's folks! Just the thing for Kapiton Ivanovich, he'd say: after a hot meeting all the administration with the chairman went to the bathhouse."

"Where'll they hear it? It's night, who's there to see?"

"Well, all right, to hell wi' 'em! Come on."

Dyadyushkin locked the club door, came down the steps and walked to the common yard where the bathhouse loomed black in the garden, behind the snow-weighted acacias, tramping a track in the snow. The brigade leaders and Butenko followed him in single file. . . .

. . . Silence brooded over the village. Here and there lights flashed up in cottage windows, as the farmers had supper and went to bed after the meeting. A song carried faintly from below, from the crossing at Rebrovy valley. Many voices joined in the chorus, then it broke off.

"He-e-eh!"

"Oho-o-o-o!"

"Granddad Iva-a-an!"

The "Beacons", circling the hamlet and descending to the Kuban, were calling to the ferryman dozing on the opposite bank.

Translated by Eve Manning

ALEXEI SURKOV

SCOUT PASHKOV (*a ballad*)

Looks like my scouting that night was no good,
And my cunning that night was a laugh,
For they caught me red-handed right there in the wood,
And they dragged me away to their staff.
With a Parabello stuck in my eye,
"Bastard," they said, "don't lie!
"Many Reds in those trees?"
"Like the sands in the seas."
"Many guns?"
"You can count if you try."

Here a sergeant got sore and started to slog
With his rifle, a ticklish tool.
"Answer our questions, you son of a dog!
Enough of your playing the fool!
Don't try," said the guy, "to get funny with us.
Out with it now! Don't stall!
Tell the truth and you're free and there won't be a fuss.
Keep it back, and you're dead—that's all."

If they beat you to putty and throw you about,
I'm telling you, brother, it hurts.
The price was sure high, but I figured it out,
And decided to take my deserts.
Then they twisted my arms—once again—and again—
And they battered my shoulders and back.
It isn't so nice to remember what then—
I don't want to remember the rack.

But the big guy—he sees that the torture's the bunk,
So he figures he'll do it up brown,
Shoves a spade in my hand, "Get going, you skunk!"
And they usher me out of the town.
There I dug me a bed in the earth with these hands
While their rifle butts prodded for fun.
You can be a bum shot, yet your bullets will land
In a fellow who hasn't a gun.

They gathered around
My bed in the ground.
And their shots at that range were a cinch.
The number of bullets I took in the face
Was easily one to the inch.
I fell on my face in the hole I had made,
With a sizzling under my shirt.
An officer gave me a blow with a spade
Where the lead in my shoulder-blade hurt.

They dug me in tight and left me alone
With that weight pushing down on my chest.
I wiggled a leg, got a cramp in the bone,
Couldn't breathe for the clay, as I guessed.
But to go and pass out in that grave—what the hell!
Better flirt with your fate, the old witch.
So I gathered the strength—where from I can't tell,
And tried to get out of that ditch.
I turned myself over. I clawed at the clay.
I felt of my body. I wasn't dead!
There at my feet the coffin lay,
There at my head the stars were spread.
I kissed the dirt and crawled away
To the woods where my pals were collected.
At half past ten I was pickled in clay,
At eleven I resurrected.

I felt O.K. on the following day,
My first funeral wasn't so bad.
So I pointed my tommy gun over the way,
And gave them all that I had.

Translated by Margaret Wettlin

BOOKS AND WRITERS

LENIN AND LITERATURE

Lenin's role in history as the theoretician and practical leader of the Communist movement, the founder and the first head of the Soviet State has tended to overshadow certain aspects of his activities, particularly for those who are insufficiently acquainted with his works.

It goes without saying that a man as erudite as Lenin was well read and had a mature taste in literature. But this is not all. It should be noted that the impressions he derived from the great works of literature served to form the salient traits of his own literary style. This refers not so much to the manner of his writing as to his peculiar and characteristic ability to employ the creations of the masters of literature, an ability attesting to his deep understanding of them. Again and again he was able to disclose a new and profound significance in things that had been read dozens of times over, was able to give fresh lustre to meanings dimmed by endless repetition, make old truths sound as though pronounced for the first time. His citations, numerous references to famous writers and manner of presenting examples give us an insight into his literary tastes, his affection for the Russian realism of the 19th century and for his contemporary, Maxim Gorky. He was greatly attached to the classics of Russian and Western literature which struck a creative chord within him.

All this, however, fails to answer the question whether Lenin's views on belles-lettres are as important as his economic and political views. Perhaps his likes and dislikes in literature resulted mainly from the peculiarities of his character, his individuality and background?

Lenin himself gave splendid examples of how his general principles should be applied to art. His works, dealing with questions of politics, economics, philosophy, public education, his articles and letters dwell in part or in their entirety on various phenomena of belles-lettres. Lenin has made frequent references to Leo Tolstoy, Alexander Herzen, Nikolai Chernyshevsky, Ivan Turgenev, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Nikolai Dobrolyubov, Maxim Gorky, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Henri Barbusse and Upton Sinclair.

In his articles devoted to particular authors and in his every reference to literature Lenin displays a profound thoughtfulness. Though his articles on art are few as compared with those on other subjects they show how highly he valued fine literature and reveal in sharp relief the criteria he employed in his judgements. An examination of this part of Lenin's literary legacy will show that not only his articles on art, but also his references to writers and their works are organically connected with the entire system of his views. This may be seen from his personal letters as well as from the memoirs about him. So thoroughly did Lenin cover the main questions of modern art, that those who are unfamiliar with his views may no longer regard their knowledge of esthetics as complete.

It is impossible, of course, to give even a brief synopsis of the problems arising from the connection of Lenin's name with that world of topics covered by the term "esthetics." We shall, however, try to convey an idea of this relation as it pertains to certain principles of esthetics, first of all, to the question of realism, i.e., to artistic truth, the interrelation of truth in art and life, or, to put it in a more general way, of art and life.

Lenin's ideas on artistic truth were most fully revealed in his articles on Leo Tolstoy.

One of the greatest writers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Leo Tolstoy stirred the minds of millions by his major works and publicistic writings. It was impossible "just to read" the things he wrote. His works invariably compelled the reader to re-examine his own relations with contemporary society.

Tolstoy's criticism of society and human relations had a firm social basis and therefore met with a wide response from those who were opposed to the injustices of the system of exploitation. Tolstoy, at the same time, evolved his own social philosophy in which he repudiated social-political struggle in favour of the moral self-perfection of the individual, of asceticism and quietism—to oppose injustice and violence only with nonresistance to evil and with love. The Tolstoyan utopia attracted many followers from among the petty bourgeois intellectuals and the peasant truth seekers of whom there were not a few in Russia at the end of the 19th century. This variety of "Tolstoyans" began to organize their religious-moral sects. Applying the method of "passive resistance", they refused to do military service or to pay taxes, and were persecuted by the tsarist authorities which, however, sustained no perceptible injury from their "passive rebellion". Not only honest visionaries, but many liberal bourgeois spokesmen, sober politicians and businessmen, began more and more ardently to propagate his utopia, to preach above all its passivity and restraint from real struggle. There can be no question here of sincerity and still less of a readiness for self sacrifice for the sake of the Tolstoyan ideals. The liberal phrasemongers were seeking merely to enhance their reputations by affecting an affinity with the great man. They were not in the least afraid, moreover, of disseminating these ideas which, they were quick to see, could prove of advantage to themselves, since it would enable them to restrain a large num-

ber of the working people from resisting violence with violence, i.e., from the revolution which was obviously approaching. Curiously enough, both the false and sincere supporters of Tolstoy's ideas, though they differed on many things, were united in their efforts to portray him as absolutely monolithic, absolutely consistent. Stifling the Tolstoyan protest, they sought to turn it into a prop for Tolstoyan resignation.

This reactionary version of Tolstoy was opposed by the outstanding sociologist and critic Georgi Plekhanov, Social-Democrat and older contemporary of Lenin. In his article, *From Here to There*, he sharply outlined the inner contradictions of Tolstoy and, while paying due tribute to the social value of the artistic scenes he had created, flatly rejected his social-philosophical ideas. Plekhanov thus defined the limits "from where till where" Tolstoy could be accepted. At the same time, he gave an explanation of the causes which gave rise to these inconsistencies in the world outlook and art of the great writer. Tolstoy's social contradictions were explained by Plekhanov on the score that Tolstoy was a representative of the Russian nobility, of the feudal-landowning class whose interests he defended. In the second half of the 19th century, the abolition of the feudal system, the mainstay of this class, undermined its domination. By the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries it was forced to yield before victorious capitalism in Russia. It was precisely because the feudal system had outlived itself historically, wrote Plekhanov, that its ideologist, Leo Tolstoy, was unable to formulate a realistic theory, but created merely a utopia with a nostalgia for feudalism. Plekhanov explained Tolstoy's glorification of peasant morality on the same principle, of the defence of the interests of the decadent nobility. It was natural for the decaying landed gentry to seek the support of the patriarchal peasantry, also a part of feudal society and also attempting vainly to resist its disintegration under the pressure of the new bourgeois order. Plekhanov thus regarded Tolstoy's ideology as something prompted by a narrow class outlook, as a subjective effort to strengthen and conserve the dying class of landed gentry by means of an artificial and reactionary theory. Plekhanov, therefore, sharply divided Tolstoy's works into two separate parts: the purely artistic, descriptive faculty to which Tolstoy owed his genius, and the false, thoroughly reactionary theorizings which had nothing in common with his powers as an artist. This criticism, disclosing the inconsistency of Tolstoy's works and dispelling the legend of his monolithic quality, was an important step forward as compared with the religious-sectarian treatment which Tolstoy's works had received at the hands of the bourgeoisie. But Plekhanov's analysis, too, suffered from certain defects which are obvious when his criticism is compared with that of Lenin. Such a comparison, moreover, will facilitate an understanding of Lenin's method.

Lenin's first article on Tolstoy, published in 1906, was entitled: *Leo Tolstoy, Mirror of the Russian Revolution*. As may be seen, the title alone reveals a point of view quite different from that of Plekhanov.

Like Plekhanov, Lenin refuted the myth about the monolithic quality of Tolstoy.

"And the contradictions in Tolstoy's works, views, teachings and school are glaring indeed," wrote Lenin. "On the one hand we have a ruthless criticism of capitalist exploitation, an exposure of the violence of the government, the farce of the courts and of the government administration, a revelation of the full profundity of the contradictions between increasing wealth and the achievements of civilization and the increasing poverty, brutalization and suffering of the working class masses; and on the other hand we have the fanatical preaching of 'nonresistance to evil.' On the one hand we have the most sober realism and the tearing away of all masks, while on the other hand we have the preaching of one of the most abominable things on earth—religion, the endeavour to replace priests officially appointed by priests who are priests by moral conviction. . . ."

The inconsistencies in the works of Leo Tolstoy were thus more sharply revealed by Lenin than by Plekhanov.

"Tolstoy is ridiculous as a prophet who has discovered new recipes for the salvation of mankind—and therefore the foreign and Russian 'Tolstoyans' who desire to transform what is actually the weakest aspect of his teaching into a dogma are absolutely contemptible. Tolstoy is great when he expresses the ideas and sentiments which were engendered in millions of Russian peasants at the time the bourgeois revolution began in Russia."

Lenin, however, does not seek for the cause of these contradictions in subjective motives, as Plekhanov did.

". . . the contradictions in Tolstoy's views and preachings are not fortuitous . . .;" and they ". . . are not contradictions inherent in his ideas alone—they are a reflection of the extremely complicated and contradictory conditions, the social influences and historical traditions which determined the psychology of various classes and various sections of Russian society in the *post* Reform, but *pre*-revolutionary era." (i.e., in the period between 1861 and 1905).

These words reveal Lenin's point of departure. He regarded the ideology, i.e., the social consciousness, as a reflection of objective reality. For this reason "distorted" ideas (not, of course, in the case of petty, purely, personal and accidental aberrations, but in socially significant phenomena to which the works of a great artist belong) always correspond to distortion, i.e., confusion and inconsistency in social reality. One should note, however, that according to Lenin, there is a difference between real contradictions in life and their reflection in the consciousness. In his philosophical notes, Lenin remarked that the approach of the human mind to certain things (cognition) was not the plain, direct dead action of a mirror, but a complex, zigzag process in which it was possible for the fantasy to fly from life and for an individual to stray, subconsciously, from abstract ideas to fantasy.

The human consciousness, like all nature

and social reality, moves and develops through the rise of contradictions and their solution. The unity of the laws of nature ("external world") and of the human consciousness renders the external world accessible to the mind. Lenin was opposed to the disbelief in the ability of the human mind to grasp the objective truths of life. He was a determined opponent of the philosophy of Berkley, Hume and Kant and their later followers. Lenin believed that the human mind could gradually derive the absolute truth from a chain of comparative, incomplete and biased truths. At every stage of social development and the development of one or another social class there is a specific type of thought combining the true with the untrue in its own way. At each, moreover, there is a limit to the possibility of the human mind's approach to absolute truth. These true and false conceptions, in turn, flow from the contradictions of real life. The nature of the human mind, however, is such that it can convert a part of cognizable life into a false conception of its reality. It is this limitation in the process of thought, due to social and class causes, which may lead to philosophical conclusions which are completely divorced from reality and indeed prevent a corrrect understanding of reality.

Such precisely is the discrepancy between that which is true and untrue in the works of Tolstoy. This is the disparity between a profound and realistic picture of society, a thorough understanding of many of its important aspects on the one hand and the idealistic, pious preaching of Asiatic quietism on the other. Lenin does not place the "equal sign" between these sides of Tolstoy's works, as did the "Tolstoyans" and the liberals. Nor does he agree with Plekhanov who oversimplified matters by dividing Tolstoy into two separate parts (*From Here Till There*)—that of the artist and that of the thinker. According to Lenin, the utopia of Tolstoy was something that sprang from reality. He believed that the art of Tolstoy and his ideas are in contradiction to one another but nevertheless are parts of a single entity.

". . . Tolstoy in his works—both as an artist and as a thinker and preacher—embodied in amazingly bold relief the features of the historic singularity of the entire first Russian Revolution, its strength and its weakness."

And in his article *Leo Tolstoy, the Mirror of the Russian Revolution*, Lenin sought to determine what specific aspect of social reality in the epoch from 1861 to 1904 lay at the root of those contradictions which Tolstoy expressed with such force that it shook the world.

"The juxtaposition of the name of the great artist and the revolution which he obviously did not understand" (revolution of 1905) "and from which he obviously held aloof may at first glance appear strange and artificial. Can you use the term mirror of something which obviously does not reflect phenomena correctly? But our revolution is an extremely complex phenomenon. . . And if it is a really great artist we have before us, his works are bound to have reflected at least some of the essential aspects of the revolution."

Analyzing the social criticism in the works and articles of Tolstoy, Lenin showed that these expressed the revolutionary protest of the multi-millioned masses of the Russian peasantry.

"The endeavour to sweep away completely the official church, the landlords and the landlord government, to destroy all the old forms and systems of landownership, to disencumber the land and to establish a community of free and equal small peasants in place of the class police state, runs like a crimson thread through every historical step taken by the peasants in our revolution; and there is no doubt that the ideological content of Tolstoy's writings corresponds far more to this endeavour of the peasants than to the abstract 'Christian anarchism' which the 'system' of his views is sometimes judged to be."

From this point of view one may more readily understand Tolstoy's utopian teachings of "nonresistance to evil."

"The whole past life of the peasants had taught them to hate the lord and the official, but had not taught them, and could not have taught them, where to seek the reply to all these questions." (To the questions what were to be the new forms of social life and what was the nature of the struggle to be waged in order to win this freedom for themselves—E. U.) "In our revolution the smaller part of the peasantry really did fight, organizing itself, at least to some extent, for this purpose, and a very small part took up arms for the extermination of its enemies and for the destruction of the tsarist servitors and defenders of the landlords. The greater part of the peasantry wept and prayed, reasoned and dreamed, wrote petitions and sent 'intercessors'—quite in the spirit of Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy!"

That is how Lenin discloses the social content in the works of Tolstoy. As can be seen, his analysis of works of art is quite different from that of Plekhanov. The latter regarded Tolstoy, firstly as a landowner and on this basis explained the ideas of Tolstoy. To Lenin, Tolstoy's aristocratic extraction and the degradation of the landed gentry was of quite another significance in explaining his world outlook.

"The breakdown of the 'old pillars' of rural Russia," wrote Lenin, "sharpened his attention, deepened his interest in that which was happening around him, and upset his entire outlook. By birth and rearing, Tolstoy belonged to the upper landed gentry of Russia, but he broke with all the views accepted by these circles and in his latest works descended with passionate criticism on all contemporary state, church, social and economic laws and regulations, based on the enslavement of the masses, on their poverty, on the ruin of the peasantry and the small home owner in general, on violence and hypocrisy which pervades our contemporary life from top to bottom."

Maxim Gorky recalled how Lenin once said of Tolstoy: "Before that count, there was never a real muzhik in literature."

This analysis of Lenin's of the social con-

tent of Leo Tolstoy's work deals with the main problems of fine literature in general.

We have already noted that in literature as in every ideological phenomenon Lenin saw a reflection of reality. It was precisely because of this that he did not base his judgement on the class origin of the artist or even on the preconceived thesis with which the writer went to work. He attributed most importance to the results of the artist's endeavour, to his literary work. Reviewing its objective content and comparing its ideas with life, he drew the necessary material from this both for an understanding and an appreciation of the work.

It is only the spiritually degenerate practitioner in art or philosophy, completely separated from the interests of the people, indifferent to the fate of mankind and culture, who can isolate himself within a circle of formal questions of his profession without distinguishing progress from reaction, oppression from liberty, the rights of the people from the selfishness of the parasitic privileged class. Among the great representatives of science and art it is impossible to find even one who gave himself up to his professional activities to the exclusion of reflection on life. Marxism-Leninism inherited this feature in addition to others from the achievements which marked the cultural heights of the past, and developed it into a general principle based on an understanding of human history as a history of struggle for liberation. This determines also the criterion by which social facts and phenomena are evaluated: all of them are regarded with a view to their significance in the struggle for freedom, for Socialism. Such a criterion is natural to a consistent democratic world outlook which can accept only that which furthers the interests of the people and must reject that which is opposed to their interests.

Lenin's analysis of the art of Tolstoy shows, first of all, that in the great works of art he saw the profound and many-sided truths of life. Lenin's appreciation of a work of art depended on how truthfully and profoundly it reflected life. His yardstick, in other words, was the measure of its truth, its realism. Secondly, in Lenin's understanding of art and appreciation of its merits, his esthetic and social-political appraisals of it are organically blended one with another.

Returning to his articles on Tolstoy, one should note that Lenin, just as forcefully as he characterized the objective integrity of Tolstoy's work as an expression of the Russian peasant movement over an entire historical epoch, divided Tolstoy's "intellect" from Tolstoy's "prejudices"—that in Tolstoy which "belongs to the past" from that in Tolstoy which "belongs to the future."

This distinction plays an important role in the Marxist-Leninist method. Joseph Stalin wrote about it in his work, *On Dialectical and Historical Materialism.*

"There are different kinds of social ideas and theories. There are old ideas and theories which have outlived their day and which serve the interests of the moribund forces of society. Their significance lies in the fact that they hamper the development, the progress of society. Then there are new and advanced ideas and theories which serve the interests of the advanced forces of society. Their significance lies in the fact that they facilitate the development, the progress of society. . . ."

What bearing has this upon esthetic appraisal? The writer, of course, is not to blame for the shortcomings evolving from a dual phenomenon in history. It is his duty to permit life to disclose its essence in his works. Its dark and tragic features must not be veiled. If, therefore, he depicts the feeble aspects of, for example, the peasants' movement, aspects which cost the people great and prolonged suffering, this cannot be interpreted as a weakness of the author. The limitation of Tolstoy's realism, however, lies in his uncritical reaction to the social meaning of peasant democracy, his inability to perceive its inner contradictions, to distinguish the progressive from the backward phenomena, and in the fact that he attributed a monolithic character to the whole of it.

"But the vehement protestant, the passionate accuser, the great critic at the same time manifested in his works a lack of understanding of the causes and of the means of escape from the crisis which was hovering over Russia such as befits only a patriarchal naive peasant, but not a writer with a European education," writes Lenin in his article *L. N. Tolstoy.* This is of great importance in an artistic judgement of Tolstoy and his realism.

There are many definitions of artistic genius in world science and art, many of them based on formal, esthetic principles. Lenin attributes chief importance to the artist's ability to reflect "at least some significant phases" of social life. Striving for this, whether he would or no, a genuine artist is always faithful to artistic truth.

Let us take an example from Tolstoy. In his novel *Resurrection,* he tried to interpret the triumph of "nonresistance to evil" through the fate of Prince Nekhlyudov. But just what did Nekhlyudov achieve in his struggle for justice? He was able to help only a few unfortunate people. His rare successes in this, moreover, were not achieved through his gospel of love, but by engaging attorneys and by his connections in upper-class bourgeois circles.

Another example is Constantine Levin in the novel *Anna Karenina.* Tolstoy through this character expounds his beloved utopia, the force of conscience which can reconcile the landowner with the peasant, but right here too Tolstoy relates how Levin suffered complete failure when he approached the peasants with his reconstruction plans. They distrusted the nobleman in him.

These examples show that a great artist cannot take liberties with the truth even to embellish his own preconceived notions and prejudices. It is to such "victories of realism," as Engels put it, that realistic art owes its value. The extent to which this endows a work with artistic as well as social-political or philosophic importance can be seen, for example, in the final chapters of *Resurrection* where the "Tolstoyan" views of Nekhlyudov are set forth without verification with the situation in life and the natural reaction of the characters—whereupon the novel turns

into a sermon and ceases to be a work of art. The failure to perceive the true significance of that which he has captured from life not only reveals a fallacy in the author's social views, but also an artistic failing.

Lenin distinguished sharply between objectivity in realistic art and apathetic, indifferent objectivity. He believed that the subjective fervour of the artist, that element which infects his readers, derives its force from the same vital sources as the objective side of art, from social reality.

"Leo Tolstoy's criticism, for this reason, is distinguished by such fervour, such passion, conviction, freshness, sincerity and fearless striving 'to penetrate to the root causes' of the distress of the masses that it genuinely reflects the great change in the views of millions of peasants just emerged from serfdom, but who see that their newly gained liberty promises them fresh terrors of ruin, starvation and homeless existence. . . ."

A real writer is not an outside observer but an active participator in life. His fervour does not spring from "artistic temperament"; nor is it a mechanical-literary instrument calculated to "engross the reader." Fervour is a thing that is derived from the life of the people and gains a grip on the writer only if he is striving to understand and express the truth about society for the purpose of bettering society. Of such a nature was the fervour of Dante, Shakespeare, Balzac and Pushkin. Owing to this, too, Leo Tolstoy's description of Russian society in the second half of the 19th century was, as Lenin put it, "a step forward in the artistic development of mankind." This same social fervour, born of the proximity of the people's interests to the heart and mind of the writer, was responsible for the best works of Gorky, the first artist who even before 1905 perceived those new social tendencies of the masses which were later consummated in the Soviet Union. Lenin welcomed this genuinely democratic fervour for truth in Henri Barbusse's *Le Feu*. Barbusse was the first writer to describe the world war of 1914 from the point of view of the masses.

Our reiteration of the words "people" and "masses" is not fortuitous when we write about the chief problems of artistic literature. We are not, of course, dealing with the esthetic "mass character" paradox of, say, the German expressionists (Karl Unruh, for example) with its denial of individual heroes in the novel and drama. Such theories may sound very "radical", but even brief reflection will show them to be pervaded with the arrogance of the "élite". Nothing could be more alien to Marxism, to Lenin's conception of the people, than the decadent bourgeois pseudo-revolutionary idea of the masses as something void of personality, of the man of the people as a creature void of individuality. Equally alien to Marxism as this reduction of man to the status of a mere herring in a shoal, however, is bourgeois individualism based on the same contemptuous attitude to the "hoy-polloi." The Marxist view of the "individual and society" is based on an entirely different principle.

Varied though the characters and fates of different people may be, the individuality always has a social character, determined on the one hand by historical cultural traditions and on the other by contemporary culture in which the social element predominates. What determines the thoughts and sentiments of a "living individual?" Lenin asks:

"Can one seriously defend the opinion which declares that they appear accidentally and do not flow necessarily from a given social environment which serves as material for the spiritual life of the individual, and which is reflected either negatively or positively in his 'thoughts and sentiments,' in the representation of one social class or another?"

Lenin's method of enlarging this idea is of primary importance to literature: ". . . By what token should one judge the 'thoughts and sentiments' of *real* individuals? Clearly, such a token can only be the *actions* of these individuals. . ." Arguing with the subjectivists, Lenin said: ". . . When I study *real* social relations and their *real* development, I am actually studying the sum total of the activities of individuals. To put things bluntly, you speak of 'living personalities,' but your point of departure actually is not 'the living individual' harbouring the thoughts and feelings prompted by his conditions in life . . . but a doll which you cram with your own 'thoughts and feelings.' Naturally, such a practice can only produce innocent illusions; life will pass you by and you will be separated from life."

These ideas were expressed by Lenin in his argument on "subjectivism" and "realism" in sociology. Clearly, however, they apply very well to esthetics and literature. The writer who is a realist, i.e., whose works reflect the truths of life, orientates himself on the facts of social activities, on the actions of people. By studying them in this light, he gains a complete idea of the individual, his varied thoughts and feelings connected with his actions. Since personal qualities have a social character, the writer describing individual characters, their relations and fate, is actually describing society.

One need not fear that such a social view of the individual will limit mankind to only a few types. Typical characters, in the first place, "were not invented by the Marxists," but have been in existence for a long time. Obviously there are no grounds for complaining that Cervantes' Don Quixote, Molière's Tartuffe, Gogol's Chichikov, Dickens' Uriah Heep, Shchedrin's Iyudushka Golovlev impoverished literature because they were true to type.

There are many human types, of course, and many gradations and differences between them. Life with its vast variety is an illimitable source of material for art. The social content of literature raises a different question. Obviously it is not such writers as Marcel Proust, Paul Valery and James Joyce, writers hedged in among the specific interests of narrow social groups, who can exert influence on millions of readers and earn their affection, but only those whose works reflect the problems vital to the people, to the masses. If, for example, Leo Tolstoy,

whose characters belong mainly to the upper crust of Russian society, had exclusively expressed the interests of these narrow circles is it likely that he would have found a warm response among millions of readers? He won universal sympathy because the lives, morals and outlooks of his heroes reflected those questions which evolved from the oppressed condition of the people.

All this, we hope, will explain Lenin's preference for realistic art. He did not regard "realism" as something formal, as a school of art, but as the highest principle in art as a whole, as a truthful artistic expression of life. Such an interpretation is broad enough to include the fantasies of Swift, Rabelais, Balzac, Gogol and Shchedrin whose works also reflect the truths of life. Lenin repudiated pseudo-realistic and unrealistic tendencies for the same reason. Nothing was further from his inclinations, however, than to accept the "naturalistic school", slavishly copying the externals of reality without attempting to penetrate their meaning. The intensively subjective and formal tendencies of the 20th century—cubism, expressionism, futurism, all claiming to penetrate to the "crux of the matter"—likewise failed to strike a responsive chord in him. He did not regard their penchant for deforming nature as the discovery of something "supernatural", something particularly profound which could not be perceived without the aid of the artist who by special methods of his own is able to break down the usual forms of things, but rather as something superficially eccentric, affected or merely as hysteria and a flirting with mysticism resulting from the artist's isolation from life. Lenin, to whom the decisive thing in art was its content, was thus by no means indifferent to the artistic form. He did not insist on adherence to specific esthetic canons, but made such demands on artistic forms as would render them adequate to express a realistic content. These demands were: clarity, simplicity, beauty.

At the basis of Lenin's views on literature lies the principle of the "party spirit." First set forth in 1905, it signified that Socialist writers and organs of the press should regard their literary work as a component of the party's work, as a part of the political party's tasks voluntarily assumed by themselves.

This leads to another important conclusion pertaining directly to the theme of this article—the significance of Lenin's teachings for artistic realism.

The aims pursued by the Communist Party evolved from a scientific study of universally established laws. Its ideas reflect objective historical truth. The writer whose world outlook is based on a knowledge of Marxism-Leninism, therefore acquires a correct criterion for gauging the real meaning of human relations, human actions and characters.

It is not enough, of course, to master a few basic theoretical propositions and political slogans. This alone is insufficient to form a complete world outlook. "Marxism is not a dogma but a guide to action," said Lenin. "There is dogmatic Marxism and creative Marxism," wrote Stalin, "and I stand on the side of the latter." Nothing would be more incorrect than the notion of seeking a key in Marxism which should enable the possessor easily to open all doors. Marxism-Leninism teaches observation and understanding of reality in all its varied aspects. At the same time, it furnishes a scientific method which if applied by the observer will prevent him from being led astray by solitary instances or from failing to see the wood for the trees. The Marxist-Leninist method shows how the basic laws govern the numerous individual phenomena and indicates the direction in which the entire pattern of human relations is moving. It is this which has been the most exalted aim of the greatest artists of all times, the men who sought to find the deepest meaning in reality and to understand the grain of the future by direct observation of the present.

The development of the general theoretical principles of Leninism brought Soviet art to that artistic platform which Stalin termed "Socialist realism."

The spontaneous attraction which the truth of life exercised on gifted artists in pre-Socialist society had no firm basis in knowledge and owed its source mainly to belief in ideals, the triumph of which was a matter of doubt to the believer himself. The artist in class society saw the obstructions to his ideal and the cruel domination of those dark forces which stifled all growths leading to a brighter future. Quite different is the position of the artist in the new, Socialist stage of development of realism. He derives his strength not from belief alone, but from certainty. His ideal is a scientific conclusion proven by history in the past and present. He sees his ideal realized and strives actively for its complete practical development. He can see that the objective truth of reality coincides with the conscious strivings of those progressive people with whom he is one. Living in the early period of a new historical era, a period as yet pervaded with the suffering of the nations, and experiencing with his people, the colossal strain and tragedy attending the great historical turning point, he is nonetheless confident of the near and victorious consummation of the age-old "struggle of mankind for the liberation of mankind." It is his aim in life to create an art which shall bring the masses the truth about themselves, about their illimitable creative forces, and which shall facilitate the victory of democracy and humanity.

Such is the vital and permanent significance to art of the theories of Lenin and Stalin, theories which have inspired millions of our contemporaries and have paved the way to modern culture.

ELENA USIEVICH

A SON OF THE REGIMENT—A NOVEL BY VALENTIN KATAYEV

Although Valentin Katayev's novel *A Son of the Regiment* was written for children about a child, and the author himself dedicated it to children, the book has won tremendous popularity with thousands of adult readers. This is not surprising, for the fate of the village boy, orphaned by the war and roaming desolately through enemy-held territory, often within a hair's breadth of death, until he is finally saved by the Soviet people, stirs tragic memories in the hearts of all Soviet men and women who lived through the war.

The book opens with a beautiful description of autumn in the Russian countryside. After fulfilling a special mission a detail of Soviet scouts are returning to the front line. Their way lies through a wood:

"The bright light of the moon now at its zenith barely penetrated the mist. In the cold beams slanting down through the trees wisps of vapour writhed eerily as though in some mystic dance. . . .

"The wood was a mixed one. Here a shaft of moonlight showed the thick silhouette of a huge fir resembling an ancient castle; there in the distance a row of white birch trees suddenly marched into sight; in a clearing the bare branches of an aspen tree shivered in delicate tracery against the lonely radiance of a sky that looked as though it were made of curds and whey.

"And wherever the trees thinned out, white flecks of moonlight dappled the ground."

But this wood lies on the German side of the front and everything in it is menacing and hostile to the men who are cautiously creeping through, every tree trunk hides a danger. Their native Russian forest is full of alien scents, of sudden terrible surprises. A murmur came to the scouts' ears and tracking it to its source they found a little trench; covering it with their waterproof capes to form a tent, they flashed their electric torches into the slit. The picture which they saw was "simple, yet at the same time, terrible: in the trench lay a little boy, asleep.

"His fists clenched on his chest, his feet, dark as potatoes, drawn up, the boy lay on his back in a stinking green pool and wandered in delirium. His shaggy bare head which had long known no scissors, was thrown awkwardly back. The thin throat trembled. Hoarse sighs came from the open mouth with its fever-parched lips, muttered words, broken phrases and sobs. The swollen lids closing the eyes were of a pale, unhealthy, anemic colour. . . His face was scratched and bruised. There was clotted blood on the bridge of the nose.

"The boy was wandering in a terrible dreamland. Reflection of nightmare contorted his tormented face. Every moment its expression changed; now it was twisted with horror, now with a terrible despair; then sharp lines of hopeless grief would form around the mouth, the brows would writhe and tears well out from the closed eyes; then suddenly he would begin fiercely grinding his teeth, his face would assume a baleful, ruthless expression, his fists would clench so hard that the nails bit into the palms, and dull hoarse sounds would burst from the tense, strained throat."

Vanya Solntsev was twelve years old when the scouts found him. But what terrible sights his eyes have seen, what he must have suffered during the two years of war before the Soviet soldiers found him unconscious and ill! And what future can lie before a child with such a wounded and tortured soul? Is there anything left in that soul except terror and hatred, despair and bitterness?

These questions are involuntarily asked by the reader, more especially by the Soviet reader for it was in the Soviet Union that children with such a "war biography" were most often met with. Many thousands of such children roamed the German-occupied territories. It is natural that Sergeant Egorov, the scout who found the boy, when reporting to his officer Captain Enakiev, should speak of the boy's experiences as of something well known and understood.

"It's the usual thing, Comrade Captain. . . The father was killed at the front in the first days of the war. The Germans took the village. His mother did not want to give up her cow, so they killed her. His grandma and his little sister died of hunger, so he was left alone. Then the village was burned down. He went round with a bag, begging for scraps and somewhere on the road he was caught by the field gendarmes who sent him off forcibly to one of their horrible children's camps. There, of course, he caught scab, itch, and typhus and nearly died but somehow he came through. Then he ran away. He's been tramping for nearly two years, hiding in the forests. He wanted to get across the front. And in those days the front was a long way off. He got quite wild, his hair's a shaggy mane, a real wolf cub."

A ten-year-old child who has seen his mother killed before his eyes and his remaining relatives die of hunger, who has been hunted and baited like a wild beast, who has roamed the terrible forest for two years, hiding from his own kind. . . What can be more terrible than the fact that for a number of years such a biography formed no exception, was no unfortunate accident but "the usual thing".

When the boy woke up, his first instinctive gesture was to grab the long, sharpened nail which formed his only weapon and which he carried in his bag as a means of defence. What life could lie before such a child?

In *Bleak House* Dickens gives us a portrait of the boy Jo, an orphan lost in the London slums. In those days there was no such inhuman war as we have just experienecd, Jo had not witnessed such horrors as the murder of his

own mother. But nevertheless, life in "merry old England" had brought him to black despair and bitterness, resembling the state of mind of Vanya Solntsev at the moment when the scouts found him. Jo in his wanderings through London and its suburbs met with kind and sympathetic people who wanted to help him and, apparently, could have done so. But nevertheless, these kind and hospitable people did not succeed in tearing Jo from the hands of fate and he died the same unhappy, tortured little animal that he had been throughout the whole of his short, sad life.

Vanya Solntsev meets with men who are entirely absorbed in the defence of their homeland against a strong and dangerous foe who has captured entire regions of this homeland. They fight with practically no lulls between battles and the only place to which they can take the boy is their field dugout. Needless to say, these men had no opportunity for an attentive, patient and systematic education of the boy, for healing the wounds inflicted on his soul by the war. Nevertheless, only a few days later, before his outward person has regained a normal appearance, still barefoot and ragged, Vanya Solntsev already turns into an ordinary boy, inquisitive, trusting and responsive to all that is good. He only differs from other children of his age in that he is more daring and resourceful and more conscious of his hatred for the enemy.

Is Katayev's portrayal realistic in this rapid transformation? Does not the author deviate from real life in order to create a consoling deception?

The answer is no. The rapid moral recovery of Katayev's little hero is just as natural in the conditions and surroundings of this book as Jo's death was realistic in Dickens' novel. Of course, the fact that Vanya Solntsev's moral condition resembles the unhappy little savage of the London streets only at the moment when the scouts first find him is of considerable significance. The earlier part of his life had not left any scars on his soul or filled him with unchildlike bitterness.

From the earliest days of his childhood he had acquired from the adults who surrounded him and from the entire Soviet way of life, certain firm principles to which he could return as soon as circumstances were favourable to this. In the beggar's bag belonging to the little ragamuffin, next to the long, pointed nail intended for his enemies, the scouts found a torn and tattered ABC, the ABC by which all Soviet children, sons and daughters of intellectuals, workers and peasants alike, learned to read. In the ABC the words stood in big letters: "We are not lords. We are not slaves. No slaves are we."

In answer to the captain's question why the boy had dragged this ABC about with him on his wanderings, Sergeant Egorov answered quite naturally: "So as not to forget how to read."

The right to education seemed to little Vanya a connecting link with his best years, a symbol of his former life in a Soviet peasant family. This, the only thing which he could preserve, reminded him of what his life had been and of what he had been deprived by those against whom he carried his stiletto-like weapon in the same bag. This was the only thing which had remained to him from the past because it had been impossible to save anything else, even the ordinary customs of every-day life which he had learned in the peasant hut had vanished.

As an illustration of this we may cite the scene in which the scouts first set food before the starving boy after bringing him to their tent in the camp.

"He shovelled the food down so avidly that it sometimes stuck in his throat. His hard, sharp-pointed ears moved under his shaggy, greyish, long-uncut hair with the energetic action of his jaws.

"Brought up in a respectable peasant family, Vanya Solntsev knew well enough that he was being very bad mannered. Etiquette demanded that he should eat without haste, every now and then wiping his spoon with a piece of bread and without shuffling and champing too much.

"Politeness also demanded that, from time to time, he should push away the messtin and say: 'I thank you for your bread and salt. I am fully satisfied' and not continue eating until he had been urged three times: 'Be so good, eat some more.'

"Vanya knew all this very well but he could not help himself. Hunger overcame all rules of good manners."

It goes without saying that his past life in a respectable collective farm family with its firm moral principles and the childlike yet firm knowledge of his own rights, instilled in him by Soviet life and school, distinguished Vanya from the little ragamuffin born amidst the physical and moral deterioration of the London slums. But that alone was not sufficient to save him.

We know how many people of different ages and countries became morally corrupt and ran wild almost irretrievably under the conditions of the brutal fascist occupation. It goes without saying that a twelve-year-old boy, having lived the life of a weak and intimidated little animal amongst strong and cruel beasts for more than two years, received such moral wounds as might easily have warped his soul forever. And the decisive influence in his rapid recovery was the fact that the men who saved Vanya from this terrible life were not simply good and kind people but his own people. They knew and understood both his pre-war life in the village with his parents, and the tragedy he had lived through, which had been the tragedy of millions of Soviet people.

To the scouts who found him and to their Captain Enakiev Vanya Solntsev did not appear extraordinary or as needing special treatment. They saw in him an ordinary mischievous, daring and kindly boy, resembling their own brothers and sons, to each of whom the war might have brought the same misfortunes as it did to Vanya. And therefore their attitude to Vanya did not contain even a trace of the fastidious pity and even fear with which his kindhearted patrons approached little Jo.

Captain Enakiev on hearing the report on the boy, without having even seen him, does not permit the scouts to keep him but orders them to send Vanya to the rear. But that is not because he wishes to avoid the

extra trouble of looking after a child under front-line conditions. There is quite a different reason for the captain's orders. When the Germans attacked Minsk, Captain Enakiev's family, his wife, mother and four-year-old son, were killed by a bomb thrown into a crowd of fugitives. Now, at the time when the story is written, his son would have been seven years old. Wherever he goes the captain is haunted by a picture: "Fire, flashes, explosions which rent the air, machine-gun bullets spraying, a frenzied crowd with its baskets, suitcases, baby carriages and bundles, and a little boy of four in a blue sailor cap falling like a bloodstained rag, waxen hands flung wide, between the roots of a torn-up pine."

When refusing permission for Vanya to remain with the regiment and to be trained to become a scout, Captain Enakiev says:

"Asked himself, did he... It's not allowed. And in any case how could you undertake such a responsibility? After all, he is a little being, a living soul. Suppose anything happened to him? He might be shot, such things happen in wartime. Isn't that so, Egorov?"

And all those who come into contact with the little "shepherd," as the scouts nicknamed Vanya, also see in him either their own selves in the distant past or their near and dear ones. That is what gives them such profound understanding, such natural and effective sympathy which heals the wounded soul, be it adult or child, better than any conscious effort.

Extremely characteristic are the thoughts which the sight of this boy arouses in corporal Bidenko and later, when Vanya enters a Suvorov school, in the old general, hero of the Civil War who had fought at that time under the glorious banners of Stalin at Tsaritsyn, Kronstadt and Orel, and again in this war under the same glorious banners at the same Orel, and at Tsaritsyn which had become Stalingrad. Both these men standing at different levels of military rank and culture think of one and the same thing and closely resemble each other. Each of them recalls his own childhood, "the early morning in the village, the fog and the cows being driven out to pasture, dew poured like milk over the bright green grass of the fields and sparkling with a thousand points of light; and in his own hands the little pipe, cut from an elder stem, from which he drew such clear, tender, monotonous yet merry notes."

The difference between Vanya and Jo is, therefore, as we have already said, that Vanya did not simply fall into the hands of kind and well-meaning people but that he came home as it were to his own kind, where everyone understood him and where he knew everything.

In this connection there is another parallel to be drawn with Dickens' story, which involuntarily arises in the mind of the reader.

Katayev pictures the following episode: on the way to the rear Vanya runs away from Corporal Bidenko who is taking him there by Captain Enakiev's orders. And thus a misunderstanding arises between him and the military unit that had sheltered him. But this incident only prolongs his homeless wanderings for a few days, whereas Jo's flight from the people who had sheltered him, which was also due to a misunderstanding, ends in his lonely death.

Vanya runs away because he does not want to go to a children's home, to part from his saviours amongst whom he had felt so happy and at home. He runs away because he considers it an injustice to send him to the rear. But he is not frightened nor bitter, and does not run blindly wherever his feet take him. He has a very definite aim—to find a commander who could give orders even to Captain Enakiev, that the latter should permit his scouts to keep the boy with the unit, to include him on the list for "issues of all kinds—clothes, rations, money." For during the few days which Vanya spends roaming about in search of such a commander he sees with his own eyes a boy, only a little older than himself, wearing a cavalry greatcoat, a round Kuban hat, a bright crimson bashlyk (hood), and with the insignia of a corporal on his epaulettes. And the boy has told him that he belonged to a Cossack cavalry unit.

"But they didn't take me," said Vanya crushed. "First they took me, and then they said it wasn't allowed. I even slept in the tent with them once. With the scouts, the artillery ones."

"Looks as though they didn't take to ye," said the magnificent boy in a matter-of-fact tone, "if they didn't want to take ye as their son."

"What d'ye mean, son? Whose son?"

"Son o' the regiment, of course—everyone knows that. Without that it's not permitted."

This seemed decisive evidence to Vanya that Captain Enakiev had treated him unfairly. For Vanya knew that the scouts had been very fond of him and that they had carried out the orders of their commander very unwillingly.

In search of an officer who might rectify this injustice Vanya runs into none other but Captain Enakiev who had never set eyes on him. Having listened to the boy the captain understands that his wish is not to be denied, that this is the thing the boy needs more than anything at this moment. A new life begins for Vanya. A life full of danger and grief, but also full of love and tenderness, of friendship and comradeship. And this turns the neglected, despairing boy not merely into a normal child but into a child-hero, of which there were many amongst the Soviet partisans in the war against the inhuman enslavers.

Many trials still lie in wait for Vanya. Following his patrons on a scouting mission, he is caught by the Germans and submitted to a dreadful German cross-examination. But in this terrible moment he no longer feels like a hunted cornered animal, but like a fighter in the ranks of fighters. The Germans demand that he tell them the positions of the men who taught him to be a scout, that he lead them to these positions. The boy cannot comply with this. In spite of all evidence (the Germans found his old spelling book in which he once sketched the plan of the ford across the river), he

replies obstinately: "I don't understand what you're asking me."

"The boy was standing close to the table, he was biting his lips hard, holding his head obstinately down. Tears gathered on his lashes and dropped one by one onto the map drawn on the space between a picture of an axe driven into a tree and the beautiful writing in slanting lines: 'We are not slaves. No slaves are we.'

" 'Speak,' said the German woman quietly and breathed hard through her nose.

" 'I won't,'" said Vanya still more quietly.

"At that instant he saw the officer's hand with the ring slide slowly downward, disclosing a freckled face of an unhealthy colour with a sharp red nose and a small chin, like that of an old woman. Vanya had no time to see the officer's eyes for they blazed and flashed, and then a heavy blow on the face flung him against the wall.

"Vanya struck the back of his head against a beam, but had no time to fall before he was hurled back to the table where he received another blow, as heavy as the first. And again he was not allowed to fall. He stood there swaying in front of the table, blood dripping from his nose, spattering the writing: 'We are not slaves. No slaves are we.'"

This misfortune happened to Vanya at the moment when Soviet troops had launched an irresistible offensive. The Germans fled, leaving the boy locked up in a pill-box. This adventure forged a still closer bond between him and his patrons who saw in him a born scout. In the end the boy achieved the aim which he had fought for so persistently: he became the son of the regiment, listed for "all issues." And a still greater happiness was in store for him: Captain Enakiev, the same captain who had sent him to the children's home, wanted to adopt him and made all preparations for this.

But again the war broke up the boy's family. Captain Enakiev, between whom and the boy a strong affection sprang up, was killed in battle. Many of the boy's other friends were also killed. And again the boy's destiny changed. In a note, written on the battlefield before directing the fire of the Soviet batteries onto himself, at the terrible moment when there had been practically nobody left all around him Captain Enakiev asked that care be taken of the future of his adopted son Vanya Solntsev, that he be trained to become a good soldier and later on a worthy officer. Thanks to this note, Vanya was sent to a Suvorov school (cadet school, named after the famous Russian general).

His future lies clear before him.

In portraying Vanya Solntsev's life with the soldiers, Valentin Katayev draws pen-pictures of a number of men who play a part in shaping the boy's destiny. Amongst these are the two captains, Enakiev and Akhunbayev, who quarrelled all the time they were together and, in the end, died heroically side by side, helping each other to the end in the battle against the desperate enemy; the scouts who saved and sheltered the boy; and the artillerymen to whom he had been sent by Captain Enakiev, who himself, at the last moment, sent the boy away, on some pretext, from the battlefield which, he well knew, few would leave alive. In this story we see many Soviet fighting men and each one of them is portrayed vividly and naturally.

Valentin Katayev knows how to convey heroism without stilted phrases, without grandiloquence, but sometimes touched with tender, lyrical humour. Thus, the scouts whose daring and heroism have won fame throughout the division are extremely modest and simple in the execution of their duties, but cannot help boasting about their mess. Having fed the boy with a marvellously tasty stew of pork, potatoes and onions, flavoured with garlic, pepper and bay leaves, and seeing that his guest is preparing to wash the dishes, the scout Gorbunov approves his intentions but immediately adds: "But ye can wait a bit with the pots, all the same. We're just going to have tea. Would you like a drink of tea?"

"I would, please," said Vanya.

"Well, and quite right too. That's the way it is with the scouts—as soon as we've eaten, tea. With sugar, of course," he added indifferently. "We take no count of that."

Even Captain Enakiev cannot refrain from this childish competition—as to whose rations are the best. Having called for Vanya, now already washed and shorn and clad in a new uniform, and having begun with official instructions on how a soldier should present himself to his senior officer, Enakiev decides to give the boy a treat.

" 'Let's sit down and talk. Sobolev, the tea ready?' shouted the captain.

" 'Yes, Sir, ready,' said Sobolev, appearing with a large steaming kettle.

" 'Pour it out. Two glasses. One for me and the other for Red Army man Solntsev. Or else he may think that we live worse than the scouts here. Eh, Sobolev?'

" 'That all depends on how you look at it,' said Sobolev, showing by his tone that he quite shared the captain's opinion of the scouts as people good enough in their way, but apt to throw dust in people's eyes with their hospitality.

"Sobolev placed two glasses in silver holders on the table and poured out the strong, dark tea, with its wonderful aroma. And then Vanya realized what real luxury and wealth was. True, the sugar was not lump, but granulated, but Sobolev handed it in a glass dish. There was no pork and potatoes, but Captain Enakiev placed a box of the best Moscow biscuits on the table and a tablet of good chocolate, at the sight of which Vanya was dumbfounded with delight.

"The captain looked at Vanya gaily.

" 'Well, Shepherd, tell me where it's better—here or with the scouts?'

"Vanya felt that it was better here, but he did not want to speak ill of the scouts or disparage them in any way, especially in their absence.

" 'Ye're richer here, Comrade Captain.'"

A finely chosen compliment: he used the word "richer", but he did not say that it was "better".

Even episodic personages in this book are vivid and colourful. It is sufficient to recall

the barber Glas, for instance, when he shaves a correspondent, visiting the unit, during a bombardment. Glas has no other thought in his mind except to keep up the honour of the unit which he serves. This artist at his job was invited by the scouts to come and cut the "shepherd's" hair.

"He unfolded his towel which was wrapped around his instruments, and laid them out neatly on an empty bed; the towel he tied round Vanya's neck.

" 'Long since you had a bath?'" he asked the lad in business-like tones.

" 'Not since forty-one,' said Vanya.

" 'Not so long, comparatively,' said Glas.

"All laughed dutifully. It was clear at once that Glas was a man of weight in his own sphere, a real professor, whose visit was a great honour."

The unusually lively style, thrilling plot and truthful portrayal of the fate of his little hero make Katayev's book one of the best war works in Soviet literature, and one that is read with unabating interest by adults and children alike.

ALEXANDER STEZENKO

NEW BOOKS

THE VERSES OF THE OUTSTANDING UKRAINIAN POET

Pavlo Tychina. *Selected Poems. State Literary Publishing House.* Moscow. 340 pages.

The book contains the Russian translations of selected poems and verses by one of the most outstanding poets of the Soviet Ukraine, Pavlo Tychina.

Pavlo Tychina was born in 1891 in a small Ukrainian village in Chernigov Province. His father was a deacon, his mother, a simple countrywoman. Tychina's first impressions as a child were connected with Ukrainian folk song, church ceremony, the beauty of his native Ukrainian landscape. These and the verses of the great Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko left a strong imprint upon the child's mind and nurtured his budding talent.

Tychina first gained recognition when his collection of verses *Sunny Clarinets*, was published in 1918. Imbued with a subtle poetic feeling for nature, these verses glorify "the rythm and harmony of the life on earth."

Tychina's next volume of verses, *The Plough* (1920), dedicated to the Great October Revolution, marked a new stage in the poet's career. Tychina regarded the Revolution as "a great feat of the people in the name of human happiness." The themes of *The Plough* are further developed in two later collections of verses—*A Wind From the Ukraine* and *Chernigov*.

In his verses published in 1934, in a volume called *The Party Leads Us*, the poet depicts the life of the new Soviet types of people, their heroic struggle to defend the rights won in the Revolution, in a socialist society.

The collection of verses, *One Big Family*, made Tychina popular beyond the Ukrainian Republic. In this volume about the fraternal unity of the peoples of the Soviet Union, in which Tychina inspires the people to work and struggle selflessly we find some of the best of Tychina's poetry.

In the days of the Great Patriotic War the voice of the poet and patriot called passionately for a life and death struggle against fascism. (Volumes of verses *Steel and Tenderness, Conquer and Live.*)

In Pavlo Tychina, a man of broad culture, we have a poet steeped in the rich traditions of national literature and a bold innovator in language and form. His poetic diapason is wide and diversified. Alongside the popular song we meet lyrics of a philosophical nature, where canonic forms are followed by easy-flowing blank verse.

Russian translations of Tychina's verses are numerous. A volume of the poet's verses in the Russian translation was first published in 1927. The former included, however, only three books: *Sunny Clarinets, The Plough, A Wind From the Ukraine.* A fuller idea of the poet's work was afforded by the collection published by the *State Literary Publishing House* in 1940. The volume closes with verses from the book *One Big Family* which was awarded the Stalin First Prize in 1938. In the days of the war individual editions of Tychina's verses were also published *(Lyrics, We Shall Avenge for All*, and others*)*.

The new edition of the poet's verses and poems is essentially the first Russian edition to cover the author's work over a period of thirty-five years. With a few exceptions, the volume includes all the poet's verses published in Ukrainian editions up to the present day. The verses are arranged in chronological order.

Twenty-eight Soviet poets and translators have contributed their renderings of Pavlo Tychina's poems in this new edition. Many of these translations have been published for the first time.

The volume includes an introduction to the poet's work by a Member of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian S.S.R., A. Beletsky, as well as ample commentaries.

STORIES ABOUT THE SOVIET ARCTIC

Boris Gorbatov. *The Ordinary Arctic. Soviet Writer* Publishing House. Moscow. 273 pages.

The Soviet North is the theme of these stories. They tell us about the life and work of wintering parties on the desolate islands of the Arctic Ocean—ordinary Soviet people who are transforming the cold, grim land beyond the Polar circle and making it habitable. Here we meet the explorers, scientists, builders who are building new cities and ports in the Arctic.

"Gone is the old terrifying Arctic with its curse of scurvy, its lawlessness and tragedies, its maddening loneliness. No longer

is the majestic calm pierced by hysterical shots. Mysterious murders in the dead of night, lonely death amidst the white hushed wastes. The trader with his flagrant contempt for the law, drunken orgies at the trading posts, brutal treatment of the helpless, peaceful native Chukchi, robbery, violence, indolence, stupefying monotony of daily existence—these have all faded into the past. Gone is the old accursed Arctic. Gone for good."

Thus writes Gorbatov in his story *Karpukhin From Polyniya* of the changes which have taken place in the Arctic during the years of Soviet power. These changes form the theme of all of Gorbatov's stories, written in a simple, but convincing style.

In his story *The Return of Satanaoo*, the author calls to mind Jack London's story about the Eskimo Nam-Boh, who comes home after ten years' wandering. Nam-Boh tells the natives of the wonders he has seen during his wanderings. He tells them about the "iron house" that floats on the sea without oars, the "beast which is fed with stones, for which he carries people over the land." But the Eskimoes only laugh at Nam-Boh and call him a liar. They drive him out of the village.

The writer tells the story of the Chukchi Satanaoo, who, like Nam-Boh, returns from his wanderings and tries to amaze the Chukchi with his stories about airplanes, radio, and electricity. But the natives have already seen all these wonders here in the North. Satanaoo aspires to become medicine man among them, but the Chukchis are appalled at his ignorance. Unlike another Chukchi, a young man who had visited the Mainland, Satanaoo, could neither teach the young, heal the sick, "talk over the air," nor "saw bones." And when Satanaoo tells the Chukchi that beyond the ocean able-bodied men can find no work, "they all resolve, that Satanaoo lied, and blushed for shame for him." The Chukchis were aware of only one mainland, the Soviet, and couldn't imagine that any other existed.

The Soviet Arctic had become "ordinary." Socialist relations between people had firmly taken root in the Arctic, just as they had throughout the length and breadth of the Soviet land.

Gorbatov's best stories are *Friendship*, *A Child Is Born on Cucumber Land*, *Radio Operator Vovnich and Us*. In these the author is less carried away by local colour and minute detail, but shows the exciting life of the men of the Arctic, with its hardships and dangers.

The Ordinary Arctic is a book about the people who have been placed in the grim conditions of the North—conditions which test the will and emotions of man. It shows the moral strength of the new Soviet man.

The story of the two radio operators, Stepan Timofeyevich and Kolivanov, is moving in its warm humanity. The two friends contact each other over the air in the brief moments free to them after their meteorological reports and radiograms. These precious minutes are enough for Stepan Timofeyevich to guess how lonely Kolivanov is and to help him with his friendship and sympathy. When Kolivanov's radio suddenly falls silent, his distant friend guesses that there must have been an accident. Stepan succeeds in having a plane sent to Kolivanov's rescue. *(Friendship)*.

The writer shows how the Arctic strengthens the will and develops courage, how people who go there to work discover their true selves and calling. Their feelings become deeper, finer and purer, sincerity becomes the basis of their relations.

Doctor Sergei Markovich was regarded as a rather dull, matter-of-fact person. But he proved himself capable of valiant deeds. An experienced surgeon, he undertakes the responsibility of guiding a young physician through a difficult delivery case over the radio. Thanks to his timely instructions, both mother and child were saved. *(A Child Is Born on Cucumber Land)*.

Another character who discovers himself and his place in life thanks to the Arctic is the salesman Lobas, a ne'er-do-well, who has wasted his life seeking his fortune in the gold fields. Fed up with life, Lobas finds himself in the Arctic at a distant trading station. The chief of the trading station proves to be a worthless drunkard and wrecker, who starves the population of the whole tundra. Lobas makes his way to the district centre on sledges, heedless of the cruel and bitter frosts. There he succeeds in obtaining extra provisions for the population, which he himself brings back to the North.

It is natural, therefore, for Lobas to realize that since he has irrevocably turned trader, he might just as well part forever with his dreams of wealth and glory.

"He is unaware of the fact that the name of Kostya Lobas is now front-page news. The whole country had been following the progress of his provisions train. Only a year later, when old newspapers reached the tundra, does he learn of his fame *(Trader Lobas)*.

The Ordinary Arctic was first published in 1940. Its new edition is a sign of the lively interest with which the Soviet reader met the book.

COLLECTIVE FARM LIFE

Valentin Ovechkin. *Stories*, *Soviet Writer* Publishing House. Moscow. 248 pages.

"'We've got another remarkable man here,' the chairman of a collective farm told me. . ." So begins V. Ovechkin's story *Sickness*, included in the newly published collection of his short stories.

V. Ovechkin first attracted the Soviet reader by his full length novel *With Greetings From the Front* [1] published in 1945. Though most of his short stories were written before the war they reveal the specific traits of his artistry: great power of observation, thoroughness of presentation, lively dialogues, complete familiarity with collective farm life in the various stages of its development and, chiefly, the striking figures of his "remarkable men".

There is Matvei Borodulya, for instance (*Blind Mechanic*). He, undoubtedly, would have made a gifted engineer. Springing

[1] See *International Literature*, No. 12, 1945.

from a poor peasant family, he was able to gratify his natural inclination for things technical before the Revolution only by back-breaking toil for the local kulak Tertyshkin, who exploited not only his ability, but his love of machines—"the best friends and helpmates of those so heavily burdened with farm labour." Tertyshkin compelled his workers to operate worn-out machinery, dangerous to life and limb. One day, when a locomobile operated by Borodulya blew up, he lost both eyes. He lived a life of semi-starvation. His wife, a manual labourer, managed somehow to raise her three surviving children who became workers. In Soviet times Borodulya was able to live in plenty on the earnings of his children who accomplished everything that their father had failed to do. The eldest son became a harvester-combine operator, the second son, a tractor driver and later, a tank driver, the daughter, a specialist in livestock farming. The old man, too, despite his infirmity, often proved useful. He knew so much about modern machines that his advice was always sought when something went wrong.

Artlessly written, the story holds the attention from start to finish.

Then there is the eccentric, stubborn old peasant nicknamed "Uncle Mistake". He got the name when he was expelled from the collective farm by mistake. Subsequently, it turned out that not only had he done nothing to merit this, but, on the contrary, he had been protecting the interests of the collective farm. He was rehabilitated, of course, but though he became one of the best workers on the farm, the name somehow stuck to him.

Ovechkin shows how collective farm life changed the psychology of the peasant *(Relative)* and that it is necessary to find the key to certain people to discover just what jobs they are fit for *(Sickness, Amphibian)*. He describes the women innovators on the new farms *(Praskovya Maximovna)*, the women who directed the collective farm during the war *(Sister of Stalin)* and each of his stories is a vivid record of collective farm life.

Refreshing is the humour of *Guests in Stukachi* [1], about socialist competition between two collective farms. The collectives of both farms are connected by ties of family and friendship, but public spirit gains the upper hand and, friends though they remain, they criticize each other very frankly, unprejudiced by private relations. Ovechkin's stories elucidate all aspects of life on the collective farm.

STORIES ABOUT URAL

Nina Popova. *Ural Tales. Soviet Writer* Publishing House. Moscow. 207 pages.

In *Ural Tales* Nina Popova depicts the Ural countryside in the first years following the October Revolution, during the days of struggle of the Urals against the White Guards, and then the same Ural countryside and its every-day life in the days of the Patriotic War.

They are of hardy stock, these heroes of the *Ural Tales*. Their characters were moulded as it were, by grim Nature herself. Tenacity, an indomitable will and reserve are all part of their make-up.

A true daughter of the Ural countryside is Pavla, an impoverished peasant woman, the heroine of the main story in the collection, *Ambulance Girl*.

Pavla at an early age becomes an orphan and goes to work as a farm hand for the local kulaks. She has a brief taste of happiness when she marries one of the village lads. But her happiness is short-lived; her man is sent to war.

He returns from World War I a confirmed Communist. At first Pavla does not understand Prokofy's ideas and stubbornly opposes them. But life itself draws the young woman into the struggle and she begins to take an active part in the guerrilla movement.

Pavla follows her husband everywhere in the detachment of the Red Guards. Fearless and daring, she sets out on lone scouting patrols, time and again cleverly eluding the Whites. She delivers cartridges and bombs to the partisans mounting her favourite horse Igrenka.

Prokofy is killed in battle. For the first time Pavla fully realizes what he had been fighting for; she realizes now that Prokofy lay down his life for the happiness of the people.

The White Guards are driven out of Siberia and the Urals, and Pavla returns to her native village. Life has still other trials in store for her, but her energy and vitality never fail her. She finds her place in the new Soviet village.

The peaceful life of the countryside is violated. The German invaders have set their hobnailed feet on the Soviet land. But Pavla is firm in her belief that the people will never surrender the beloved land they so bitterly fought for in the Civil War, the land drenched with the blood of partisans. What if she is now old? She can still be useful. And Pavla goes to work for an army hospital. *Ambulance Girl* is written in a vivid style which splendidly conveys the colourful and homely speech of the Ural peasant woman, who tells the story in the first person.

The background of the other tales is also the Urals with its trials and tribulations. The tales, *Sparkling Spring* and *Zolotinochka* (Gold Grain) are about the Ural collective farms and gold mines in the days of the Patriotic War.

WAR FRIENDSHIP

Anatoli Kalinin. *Comrades.* Vol. 1. *Rostov Regional Publishing House.* Rostov-on-Don. 208 pages.

Anatoli Kalinin, a young author, first attracted attention by his letters from the front, published in the newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda* during the war. His first novel, *In the South*, was a promising work and, despite certain shortcomings, could not help capturing the public by its vivid portrayals of the soldiers and officers of the Soviet Army, its realistic treatment of the war and its author's powers of perception.

[1] See page 30 of this magazine.

The action of Anatoli Kalinin's new novel *Comrades* is laid in the second half of 1942. The opening chapter finds its heroes, Andrei Rubtsov, a Don Cossack, and Pyotr Sereda, a worker from Taganrog—both soldiers of the Soviet Army—retreating over the Azov steppes toward the Don. The Germans attempt to cut off the retreat of these Soviet Army units, to surround them and force them to surrender, but the Soviet troops break out of encirclement and withdraw to Stalingrad. The author then describes the heroic defence of that city and, finally, the mighty counter-blow of the Soviet Army and the beginning of the grand Stalingrad victory which was carried to the heart of Berlin.

The first volume of *Comrades* concludes with the retreat of the Soviet Army to Stalingrad and the beginning of its counter-offensive. The fate of the heroes and the subsequent course of the war will, apparently, furnish the subjects of the next volumes of the novel.

The friendship of Pyotr and Andrei symbolizes the friendship of Soviet town and village. Andrei is a man of endurance. He is taciturn, patient and cautious. Pyotr, on the other hand, is hot-headed, impetuous and brave to the point of rashness. Both fight with equal ardour, display equal selflessness on the battlefield. But Andrei is cautious in his valour and Pyotr is irrepressible in his daring. Andrei is ready to endure anything, to spend the winter in his dugout on the banks of the Volga along the Stalingrad line held by the Soviet troops. He is gloomy and heavy hearted, but obeys his orders and withdraws from his native region. Pyotr, on the other hand, is furious. He doesn't want to retreat. He is ready for the maddest, arbitrary actions and is restrained only by the stoic calmness of his comrade.

Pyotr and Andrei are both attractive for their youth, their vivid though as yet unformed individualities. The author contrasts them with the strong and austere Captain Vladimir Baturin combining the traditional qualities of a Russian with the new features which have evolved in Socialist society. He is not ostentatious and modesty is natural to him in all that he does.

To Baturin the hundred men of his company are not just a nameless mass of soldiers. He knows the individual traits and inclinations of each of them. His method of waging war is based on his ability to enlist the natural gifts of his subordinates. His decisions in battle not only consider numbers, comparative weight in armaments, but also his estimation of his men, their individual traits and natural gifts which he uses as effectively as the deadliest of weapons. In this manner Kalinin describes another fundamental quality of the Stalin army commander and the new element which he brought to the war.

The characters of the novel are greatly varied. Many of them appear briefly in the first volume and the reader barely gets to know them before he must part from them until they turn up again in the second volume promised by the author at the beginning of the next year.

Kalinin's new novel presents a realistic picture of the Soviet people at war with fascism, a forceful record set down by an artist who himself participated in the great battles.

THE FIRST RUSSIAN INDUSTRIALISTS

Evgeni Fyodorov. *The Demidovs. Soviet Writer* Publishing House. Moscow. 344 pages.

The action of Evgeni Fyodorov's novel *The Demidovs* is laid in the epoch of Peter I. The story is centred about Nikita Demidov, a Tula smith who won fame by his skill in the production of muskets and cannon balls and the forging of sabres and spears. In those days the work of the Tula gunsmiths was superior to that of the Swedes who were famous in this field.

Tsar Peter enlisted Nikita's services and vested him with the right to prospect the mineral deposits of the Urals, to smelt ore and build factories. This served as the foundation of the fabulous fortune of the Demidovs.

The chief historical line of the novel is Russia's struggle for an exit to the sea. Fyodorov describes Peter's first battles against the Swedes, the creation of the Russian fleet, the construction of the "city in the swamps", Petersburg, the new European harbour and capital of Russia. The need for fresh supplies of metal grew greater. More and more factories sprang up in the hitherto inaccessible wilds of the Urals now yielding iron ore, copper, gold, silver and precious stones.

In constructing his story of the Demidov family, E. Fyodorov not only presented the history of these first representatives of Russian industrialists, but also depicted the birth of a new class, the class of the Russian bourgeoisie and the changes which took place in the life of the people as this process evolved.

The novel resurrects enormous masses of men, the peasant serfs, the soldiers, the first workers in the Urals mines, the people whose hands created the incredible wealth of the Demidovs and other industrialists. Here there are craftsmen from the old smithies of the state, bondsmen, religious dissenters who fled before the wrath of the tsar, and uncounted multitudes of beggared people driven by the Demidovs into the drifts, the mines and the stone quarries. They were the people who mined the ore, built the cities, minted the coins of the state, polished priceless sapphires and diamonds.

In these motley crowds E. Fyodorov singled out the most colourful, daring and gifted men, the rebels who fled from the slavery of the Demidovs, who attempted to rouse the people in the struggle for liberty.

Fresh and engaging, E. Fyodorov's language abounds in proverbs and folk sayings. Although the style preserves the colour of the epoch it does not impair clarity of expression.

Stirring passages are devoted to the landscapes of the virgin Urals, the rugged mountains, impenetrable forests, turbulent mountain streams and to the people who suffered cruelly but compelled nature to serve the needs of man.

GORKY FOR SCHOOLCHILDREN

Alexander Roskin. *Maxim Gorky. Children's Publishing House*. Moscow. 145 pages.

The *Children's Publishing House* has reprinted a detailed biography of Maxim Gorky for the *School Library* series. The author of this book, A. Roskin, was killed in the Patriotic War.

Although this small monograph was meant for children, it is also read with great interest by adults. Many of its pages are devoted to Gorky's childhood. There is a wealth of material supported by numerous documents, letters and references to his works.

The reader gains an insight into the character of Gorky, his irresistible will to live, his sympathy for downtrodden mankind, his constructive role in Russian revolutionary literature, his spiritual ties with the great humanists abroad, his affinity for the Bolshevik Party, and active participation in the construction of Soviet culture.

A prominent place in the book is given to Gorky's ideological and ethical searchings as a youth. Particularly interesting is his evolution as a writer (here demonstrated by facts little known): his lack of self-confidence at first, his initial successes, his growing skill and maturity, and finally—consummate mastery. Step by step Roskin defined Gorky's development, analyzed several of his works and their place in Russian literature.

Fame came to Gorky with the first wave of the revolutionary movement in Russia and he, too, was quickly caught up in its tide. Roskin here dwells on Gorky's part in the revolution: his financial aid to the fighters against tsarism, his underground activities which led repeatedly to imprisonment, his public addresses in the press, which were promptly taken up by the press of the world.

Gorky's letters and memoirs show him as the friend of Lenin and Stalin, and as a friend of children.

Roskin devotes one of his chapters to the relations between Gorky and Romain Rolland. "In the minds of intellectuals the world over, Gorky's name came to be linked with that of the French writer Romain Rolland," remarked Roskin who then quotes Rolland's famous words about the "roots" from which both he and Gorky had stemmed. These common roots were inevitable, explained Roskin, since, as Henri Barbusse put it, both Romain Rolland and Maxim Gorky "participated in the same great cause essential to posterity, the cause of socialism. . . ."

In his concluding chapters Roskin describes Gorky in his last years, cites his writings against reaction and the fascists—those "plunderers of the earth."

A BOOK ABOUT A RUSSIAN ARCHITECT

Anatoli Shishko. *Stonemason. Soviet Writer* Publishing House. Moscow. 184 pages.

Stonemason, the story of the Russian architect Vassili Bazhenov, professor of the Academies of Rome, Florence and Bologne, reads the title page of A. Shishko's new book.

The author has not written a detailed biography, nor an exhaustive account of Bazhenov's architectural creations. He was moved rather by the tragic fate of a man and an artist.

Vassili Bazhenov was the son of a poor village deacon and later a clerk in one of the Kremlin cathedrals of Moscow. With great difficulty he managed to be assigned to the architectural group directed by Prince Ukhtomsky, the architect. Subsequently Bazhenov became a student of Moscow University, oldest school of higher learning in Russia. It was here that he formed a friendship with the outstanding men of Catherine's times, the writers Fonvisin and Novikov, the architect Kazakov, and others.

Moving to the capital, Bazhenov joined the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts. He continued his studies abroad, in Italy and France, as pensioner of the Academy for many years. Louis XV invited him to stay as "architect of the French court." Bazhenov refused. "I love Moscow better than anything in the world," he told the monarch and departed for home.

One of the grandest objects to which Bazhenov devoted many years, the reconstruction of the Moscow Kremlin (1768-1774), was not fated to be realized in his lifetime. Engrossed with the idea of creating an ensemble grander than the temple of Solomon, the Roman Palatinate and the Acropolis, Bazhenov brought all his energy and talent to this work. It was in vain, however, that he wrote "tearful" requests to the authorities that the project over which he had laboured so arduously for five years should not be discontinued. Catherine II saw no necessity for further construction. The diggings were filled in and the foundations destroyed. Another bitter disappointment to the architect was his Tsaritsyn Palace built for Catherine II (1775-1786). "Dismantle these casemates to their foundations," such was the decision of the empress who could not forgive Bazhenov for venturing a triangular decoration for the palace. The triangle was the emblem of the Masons whom she hated.

Though Bazhenov was appointed vice president of the Academy of Arts during the reign of Paul I he was unable to realize the hopes and ideas he had cherished for so many years. Designing the famous Mikhailovsky Palace by order of Paul I, the aged architect was compelled to leave its construction to the smooth-tongued, but treacherous court architect Brenna.

Of Bazhenov's numerous projects only the palace known as Pashkov's House was completed. His designs and calculations, however, have been preserved to posterity and indeed brought forth an entire school of architects among them Bazhenov's famous friend, the architect Kazakov.

THE VOW

Mikhail Chiaureli

The release of Mikhail Chiaureli's film *The Vow*, apart from its significance to the art world, was an event of social and political importance. The acclamation accorded the picture by the general public and the critics, is only to be compared with that given to S. Eisenstein's *Armoured Cruiser Potemkin* (1925) or *Chapayev*, produced by the Vassiliev brothers (1934).

What is there in this film that created such a profound impression upon Soviet cinemagoers and film critics?

Mikhail Chiaureli, the Georgian film director, is one of the outstanding men in Soviet films. He is an artist of versatile talent. In his youth he tried his hand at sculpture, painting, theatrical production and acting. Still more recently, when already working as a film director he helped design city decorations in Tbilisi for various festive occasions, and took part in the elaboration of architectural plans for the reconstruction of Georgia's capital.

Mikhail Chiaureli's work has done much to place Georgian cinematography in the front ranks of Soviet art in this field.

In his first film, *First Cornet Streshnev*, which Chiaureli produced jointly with director E. Dzigan, he had already mastered the "secrets" of film production; he did not approach the subject as a dilettante but as a true artist who had turned pupil for a time to learn to express himself in a new medium. It was therefore quite natural that he should apply his experience as a painter to the production of *First Cornet Streshnev*. Before he began the actual filming, Chiaureli sketched all the 600 shots of the future film.

Chiaureli had his own word to say in the silent film *Saba*. Although he said it hesitantly —*Saba* came after a series of naive and sometimes even vulgar, exotic Georgian pictures, catering to purely tourist interest in the Caucasus—the psychological melodrama of the film portraying modern Tbilisi, the life and work of the Georgian capital, with its characters drawn from real life was something fresh and original.

Another side of Chiaureli's talent was displayed in his next picture *Habarda*. This did not contain either the romanticism of *First Cornet Streshnev* nor the melodrama of *Saba*. In *Habarda* Chiaureli appeared as a publicist who with biting satire attacked the negative features peculiar to certain Georgian intellectuals, especially estheticism in its ugly, one might even say, provincial forms.

His profound knowledge of his country and its history, a fine feeling for Georgian folklore, his abilities as a publicist, lyricist and romanticist all went into the making of his first, full-length sound picture, *The Last Masquerade*, portraying the period of World War I and the first days of the revolution in Georgia. Chiaureli gave a profound, temperamental and graphic interpretation of this theme with its great political content. However, Chiaureli did not always succeed in finding clear, compositional forms in which to express his thoughts and feelings, and convey them to his audiences; he did not always succeed in bringing out the important points in his story.

These shortcomings were overcome in *Arsen*, a film about a legendary hero of the Georgian people, which was distinguished by the purity of its romantic world outlook. Chiaureli produced one of the first pictures about Lenin, *The Great Dawn* (earlier Lenin films were by M. Romm and S. Yutkevich). Yutkevich said that *The Great Dawn* was "astounding in its deep penetration into the political theme of the film."

Next came the historical film *Georgi Saakadze* in two parts for which Chiaureli won a Stalin Prize. After this he produced *The Vow*.

Here we see Chiaureli as an artist with profound understanding of historical reality in its connection with his own time; he makes unerring use of the full palette at a film director's disposal—from heroic-romantic to

grotesquely accusatory colours. Chiaureli always strives to apply his art to the most complete portrayal both of events and characters; he searches constantly and ardently for new means of expression.

Chiaureli's latest work tells the story of the fulfillment of the vow to carry out the behests of the great leader, given by Stalin at the Second Congress of Soviets on the eve of Lenin's funeral, on January 26th, 1924.

Stalin's vow became the symbol of faith, the program of the life of the entire Soviet people; to depict its fulfillment meant creating a film to portray the main stages in the history of the Soviet state, the decisive events of our times. Mikhail Chiaureli and his closest collaborator, the writer Pyotr Pavlenko undertook this daring task. They set themselves this task and they accomplished it; the film is not a schematic portrayal of events, nor is it a series of symbols, it is a stirring, poetical narrative of the fulfillment of a dream, of how Socialism was built up in battle—it is a piece of creative art.

Before our eyes there passes a gallery of pictures depicting the life of the Soviet state from 1924 to 1945:

. . . The days of mourning in January, 1924, when Lenin died.

. . . Stalin's vow, made before the whole people, to guard as the apple of his eye, to defend and to uphold the sacred cause of Leninism.

. . . The first tractor on the Red Square in 1924. This first machine, the work of hands not yet sufficiently skilled, comes as a symbol of the birth of a new industry at a time when the country had not yet recovered from the terrible devastation wrought by two wars—the imperialist war of 1914-1918, and the Civil War of 1918-1921.

. . . The firstborn of the five-year plan—the Stalingrad tractor plant . . . its construction, the tremendous obstacles that had to be overcome . . . the opening of the plant.

. . . Short documentary scenes conveying a picture of the country transformed by the Stalin five-year plans: the Dnieper power station, the Molotov automobile plant, the blast furnaces, the Colchis lowlands in Georgia transformed into a flowering garden, the irrigation canals built by the people in the deserts of Central Asia.

. . . Stalin's reception in the Kremlin for the most outstanding people of our country—the heroes of labour. Stalin's speech in which he stated: "We were told that the working class, having destroyed the bourgeois order, was not capable of building up anything new to replace the old. And we have proved in fact that we are fully capable not only of destroying the old system but of building up a new, Socialist one."

. . . The pre-war days: Paris, the office of the Foreign Minister Bonnet, the man of Munich who treacherously unleashed the Hitlerite aggression.

. . . Hitler's perfidious attack on the U.S.S.R. The decisive days in the defence of Moscow. Episodes from the battle of Stalingrad. The rout of the German hordes at Stalingrad, the capture of von Paulus.

. . . The victory days. The Kremlin. Stalin in the circle of his closest colleagues. His words addressed to one of the heroes of the film. "Under the sacred banner of the great Lenin we have fully accomplished everything that he bequeathed."

This brief outline of the salient points in the film may create the impression that *The Vow* is a chronicle of events. But that is not so. No matter how great the events portrayed in the film, attention is focussed on real live people.

The Vow is a film with actors, plot and a poetically treated composition.

The central character of the film, lending it ideological and artistic strength and harmony, is the character of Stalin, played by M. Gelovani. Stalin's closest colleagues, outstanding Soviet statesmen and Communist Party leaders, played by actors whose renderings bear the authenticity of portraits, occupy a leading place in the film.

The people are personified by numerous characters, chief amongst them being Varvara Mikhailovna (played by S. Gyatsintova) who remained the head of the family after her husband was brutally murdered by kulaks in 1924; her grown-up children; the worker Ermilov, and others.

Many different aspects of life are portrayed in the film *The Vow*, but this does not make it a series of separate pictures; everything is integrated into a single impression revealing the author's main idea.

Every scene, every episode uses the language of art to relate the theme of the film—the love of the Soviet people for their leader, the unbreakable unity of Stalin, the Bolshevik Party, and the people.

In the films *Lenin in October*, *The Great Dawn*, *The Man With the Gun*, *On the Vyborg Side*, *The Defence of Tsaritsyn* and others, Gelovani only gave us brief glimpses of Stalin. His acting in *The Vow* is an attempt to convey forcefully the inner nature of the character and is not merely a portrait.

The following episodes will show what I mean.

. . . A snowstorm is raging and the incidental music complements the figure coming into view. Stalin is walking down an avenue where there is the bench on which he once sat with Lenin. Deep in thought, he stands in front of the snow-heaped bench. He removes his hat and his eyes gaze into the distance, stern, lost in thought. The camera brings us a close-up of Stalin's face: tears well up into his eyes. He casts a last look at the bench and walks away, down the avenue.

We accompany Stalin through the corridors of the Kremlin and into his study. He walks in silence but the brilliant acting, the expressiveness of the whole scene, the sad and solemn music, say much more than mere words.

What are Stalin's thoughts at that moment? What are his emotions? In the next scene Stalin sits down at his table still lost in thought, picks up a pencil and proceeds to draw something on the paper before him, and gradually Lenin's profile appears on it. Stalin turns towards us, still wrapped in thought; vignetted in the right-hand corner of the screen the figure of Lenin appears in cuts from newsreels. A hypothetical conversation takes place between the two great men. Then Lenin's figure fades. And again Stalin remains alone. But

Still from the film The Vow

M. Gelovani as Stalin

his face is changed, as though he had really just spoken to Lenin.

Then, after this, Stalin's words, when he refuses a newspaperman's request to write an obituary, ring with particular conviction:

"Such men as Lenin do not die. He lives and will live with us forever!"

Obituaries are written about the dead, but Lenin, his work, his great personality, his people and the Party which he built are living and will live forever.

With this thought in mind, Stalin walks through the garden of the Kremlin and mounts the tribune around which thousands of people are waiting for him. Here he pronounces the words of the vow which are repeated by the people.

If not for the episode in the park avenue, Chiaureli would not have been able to portray the vow in generalized, almost symbolical images. The supreme emotion of the scene on the Red Square is so stirring because the author has already shown us the inner chambers of Stalin's soul, the thoughts and feelings which stirred the entire people together with Stalin in the days of mourning of 1924.

At the risk of disturbing the stylistic harmony and emotional grip of the scene, Chiaureli daringly introduces another character—that of Varvara Mikhailovna. She has come to Moscow to carry out the dying wish of her husband (the Bolshevik worker Petrov who had been murdered by kulaks); he had exhorted her to hand to Lenin a letter full of anxiety for the fate of the young Soviet state and warning the government against the danger to be expected from the kulaks and internal counter-revolution. But Lenin was dead. To whom should she now give this message contained in the envelope that bore the simple inscription "To Lenin"?

Unhesitatingly, Varvara Mikhailovna goes straight to Stalin. Stalin gravely accepts the envelope, looks over the square filled with people from end to end, and continues to speak the words of the vow:

"The workers and peasants of the world wish to guard the republic of the Soviets as an arrow shot by the true hand of Comrade Lenin into the camp of the enemy."

With these words the scene fades out and a banner bearing Lenin's portrait appears on the screen.

The appearance of Varvara Mikhailovna helps to bring out with greater force the basic idea behind the scene on the Red Square: the banner of Lenin had passed into true hands, hands that are still bearing it through all storms and troubles today.

Out of the many episodes in which Stalin appears in the film I have cited only these two in order to convey the manner in which the character of Stalin is treated in the film: the leader is shown in unity with the people, as an outstanding statesman, and as a man.

The theme of the unity of the people with the leader is given particularly clear interpretation in two episodes reflecting Stalin's meetings with Varvara Mikhailovna in the Kremlin.

The first takes place in one of the Kremlin rooms during a reception for the leading Stakhanovites. Every word, gesture and intonation conveys Stalin's profound respect for this simple, Soviet woman.

The producer presents this scene in the colours of quite ordinary, supremely sincere human relations. And the successful work of the actors lends the episode maximum conviction. It contains nothing of the nature of a proclamation, or an attempt at symbolism; before us are real, living heroes, who are confiding to the audience those most intimate thoughts that are only spoken aloud between friends; all who see the film, however, understand and feel the profound inner meaning of this scene: the Party is speaking to the people, speaking of that which is of decisive importance to the fate of millions, to the fate of the entire country.

Although the printed word without the intonation and acting of the cast loses much, I will nevertheless venture to quote a small excerpt from the record of the episode in the Kremlin, in the hope that it will convey at least a schematic idea of the nature of the scenes of this film:

". . . Of course, one does not always say it out loud, but speaking between ourselves, we have not worked badly and we have taught them," here Stalin nods towards the hall, "something also."

"Yes, we have given them a good life, there is no doubt of that!" agrees Varvara Mikhailovna; here Stalin rose, but Varvara Mikhailovna suddenly says:

"I want to ask you something . . ." Stalin sits down and Varvara Mikhailovna follows suit. "I am an old woman and always, when other people are happy, I am afraid that something will happen to spoil it all! . . They say, there is going to be war?"

Stalin after a moment of silence:

"Yes, apparently there will be," he says bitterly. "Everything points to it."

He speaks these words with profound grief for all the sufferings and misfortunes that the war will bring to the people.

". . . It is inevitable," we hear his voice, and Varvara Mikhailovna, understanding the grief, answers with motherly, steadfast conviction:

"Then it is better, Joseph Vissarionovich, that it should happen in our lifetime. We are tested people, accustomed to bear hardships. What have we not borne," she adds, "our shoulders are broad, if we carry this war through, things will be easier for them afterwards."

And she asks once more:

"So we ought to prepare?"

"Yes, prepare, Varvara Mikhailovna," says Stalin.[1]

The second meeting between Varvara Mikhailovna and Stalin takes place in the Kremlin after the war. The triumphant strains of an orchestra, the sound of cheering, the banners of routed Hitlerite Germany lying in the dust . . . Stalin goes up to Varvara Mikhailovna and says warmly: "Thank you on behalf of the homeland." He stoops and kisses her hand. We hear Varvara Mikhailovna's words:

"So things turned out as we thought they would, Joseph Vissarionovich. We held out. We have kept our vow."

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[1] Quoted from the script of *The Vow*.

These words do not simply "round out" the theme; they are a generalization which conveys the idea of the film concisely and emotionally.

After this Stalin speaks, addressing his words not only to Varvara Mikhailovna but to all around him, to the entire nation:

"Yes, we have kept our vow and all because you and millions of Soviet mothers like you have nurtured wonderful sons. The blood shed by our people will yield a great harvest. Humanity can never forget what our people have done for its liberation."

In this way Pavlenko and Chiaureli convey the basic idea of their work—the unity of the leader, the Party, and the Soviet people.

For the complete and emotional expression of this idea the producer makes use of publicist narration, dramatic and tragic narrative, emotionality, lyricism, humour and satire.

Chiaureli's unexpected and bold transitions as a rule hold the audiences, but they may puzzle a reviewer accustomed to the generally accepted film genre. What is passing before the eyes of the audience? Scenes from a family novel? Pictures intended to be the generalization of an epic? A historical chronicle? Publicist sketches? Folklore? A tragedy that purifies and exalts the soul of man? The answer to all these questions is both yes and no.

The answer is yes because the film shows us the history of a Stalingrad worker's family from 1924 to 1945, and its presentation recalls the features of a "family novel." Before the audience pass the figures of ordinary Soviet people—Russians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Uzbeks and other nationalities—a generalized image of the Soviet people making history which reminds us of an epic. *The Vow* also includes pure documentary shots which "read" like a newsreel. The director leads us into the secret world of the inner emotions of the characters, a method characteristic of lyrical narrative. He stages tragic scenes (recall the episode with which the film opens—the death of Stepan Petrov). He unmasks the enemy with the sharp weapon of publicist satire—the scenes in Bonnet's study, in the Paris restaurant. He reproduces Russian folklore in the scenes depicting the Russian folk dances performed in the Kremlin by the worker Ermilov, and thus introduces humour, wit and colour into the film.

All this we find in the film and yet it is neither a "family novel", an epic, a pamphlet, a lyrical narrative, nor a newsreel.

It combines all these apparently incompatible elements into something entirely new, into a genre for which neither the picture-goer nor the critics have yet found a name and about which one can only say the following: this is an epic of our day, presented in an unusual but profoundly moving form.

The first full-length Soviet epic film, *The Armoured Cruiser Potemkin* related the events of a different, pre-revolutionary epoch. Pudovkin's pictures *The Mother* and *The End of St. Petersburg* dealt with the historical past of our country. The epic sound films produced were also usually narratives of the comparatively recent past: *Lenin in October* and *Lenin in 1918* were produced twenty years after the events portrayed in them had taken place. The same applies to the trilogy about *Maxim* and to *Chapayev*. *The Great Citizen* portrayed events that occurred only ten years before it was made.

Pavlenko and Chiaureli have portrayed events which took place not fifteen or twenty years ago but in our day, in the true meaning of the words. The last four reels of the picture (altogether it consists of fourteen) depict the war and victory, i.e., 1941-1945. It was first planned to produce *The Vow* in 1939; hence, the events dealt with were taking place at the

time Chiaureli filmed them, not as chapters of a newsreel but as epic episodes woven into the fabric of a narrative. In other words, *The Vow* is an epic of our day. It is the narration of modern times by a contemporary, it is a successful attempt on the part of the artist to look at his own times with the eyes of a historian.

We have seen films which were produced immediately after the events portrayed, but these were either newsreels or pictures which did not aim to cover a wide range of events or present a profound analysis of complex and great characters.

This distinguishing feature of *The Vow* is alone sufficient to emphasize its particular importance in Soviet art, while another characteristic feature of this genre, no less important than the first, is the method of developing major ideological aims.

The epic talkies of 1935-1939 showed the new ideological and esthetical possibilities of the cinema, and by their profound treatment of life surpassed all that had been done in that field by the silent film. In many of them, however, the action was limited to one year (*The Man With the Gun*) or even to one month (*Lenin in October*).

As it developed, the sound film began to cover a greater range of events. While portraying the character of Shakhov, *The Great Citizen* also drew a general picture of the struggle for the construction of Sccialism in our country, but even in this film the events covered a comparatively short period of time.

In order to relate the story of seven to eight years in his hero's life, Kozintsev and Trauberg had to produce a trilogy (*The Youth of Maxim*, *The Return of Maxim* and *On the Vyborg Side*).

In *The Vow* the artist presents an analysis not of separate phenomena, not of any given event, but of a considerable period in history about which a score of additional pictures could be made, he subordinates all individual tasks to one great theme—to show how Stalin's vow "to build up Socialism in battle" was fulfilled in the course of more than twenty years. Chiaureli gives the epic genre a new interpretation.

Great ideals, revolutionary enthusiasm, a distinct desire to create impressive epic canvases underlay. the development of Soviet silent cinematography in 1925-1929. The further growth of the Soviet cinema in the 1934-1939 period, when the so-called biographical pictures appeared, was due to the fact that our leading producers and scenario writers set themselves tasks of high ideological content, portrayed life in its most important manifestations and thus created grand epic pictures.

The Vow opens up a new page in the history of the Soviet cinema.

Not all the episodes in *The Vow* are of equal force. But it is not important that the road laid by the pathfinder be smooth; it is important that he has found the right direction, that new vistas are opened up to those who follow. Chiaureli's film fulfills this prime condition. The method of revealing the character of a man, used in this film, is in accordance with the specific features of its genre. In order to convey the contents in the fullest and most expressive way, Chiaureli organically combines the portrayal of great historical events with the destinies of real people, the sweeping strokes of the brush with carefully finished details of human conduct.

The publicist treatment of episodes of the construction period or of the war and scenes from the life of the Petrov family are simultaneous in the picture. It is a matter of debate as to where this combination is more or less successful, but nevertheless the poetical concept of the film is built up of such juxtapositions.

In discussing the work of the actors in *The Vow* we must bear in mind that the concrete precise characters of the heroes are not drawn against a "background" of events but in the midst of them. Each character in *The Vow* is built up on this delicate and organic nexus of the "particular" with the "general", on a system of poetical details which convey the inner nature of each character. Chiaureli himself tells us about his searches in this direction in his article *The Reproduction of a Great Character*: "The road to the cognition of this secret (the secret of art—I. W.) is found by means of the most delicate observation on the part of the artist, who must pay thoughtful and careful attention to everything that is either directly or indirectly connected with the presentation of the character planned—from details of private life to actions of state importance."

The difficulty of accomplishing this task lies in avoiding a naturalistic record of events on the one hand, and rhetoric, stilted fervour, empty symbolism, on the other. Chiaureli has succeeded in surmounting these obstacles. The characters of *The Vow* neither wear the "cothurnus" nor do they wander in the fields of naturalism. . . They are as characteristic as they are typical.

Chiaureli's skill as a film director made itself felt in the acting of the entire cast not only in that of Gelovani, Gyatsintova and Plotnikov. He has made a decisive break with the traditions of sham "simplicity", styled as truth. For Chiaureli the lowered voice, the bated breath and other accessories of sham cinematographical and sham "realistic" acting do not exist. He does not fear that a loud voice, a wide gesture, a certain conventionality will have a "theatrical" effect. In his work with his actors Chiaureli is guided not by the fear of the theatre (incidentally there is nothing theatrical in his film) but by the inner concept of the picture. That is why his actors who play the "good" characters show a certain tendency to elevated fervour in their work.

The style of acting in *The Vow* is subordinated to the basic idea, the major aim of the film—to portray life truthfully in its most characteristic and important manifestations. This does not tend to make the acting illustrative as is sometimes the case in films. Developing the best traditions of such of his films as *Arsen*, for instance, Chiaureli romanticises, elevates his characters without, however, departing from accuracy or reality.

The Vow is an epic of our days not only in its concept and dramaturgical qualities but in the entire style of its production, which is clever, new and masterly and of extreme value to our art in general.

ILYA WEISFELD

NEWS AND VIEWS

PLACES ASSOCIATED WITH THE NAME OF LENIN

CENTRAL LENIN MUSEUM

At the suggestion of Joseph Stalin the Central Lenin Museum was opened in Moscow on May 15, 1936. Historical material and documents depicting Lenin as a man and a leader and recording important facts and phases in the history of the October Revolution and the victory of Soviet power are housed in a building almost within sight of the Lenin Mausoleum in Red Square. The student of history may trace in these records the joint efforts of Lenin and Stalin in building and strengthening the Soviet state.

There are twenty-two rooms in the museum, each devoted to a definite period of Lenin's life (1870-1924). Originally there were eight thousand two hundred and twenty-five exhibits—Lenin's works, literary material, historical documents, Lenin's personal belongings, gifts presented to the leader at various times, pictures and sculptures connected with the names of Lenin, Stalin and their colleagues. By 1946, the total number of exhibits had increased to eighty thousand three hundred and ninety-three.

Documentaries filmed in 1917-1919 showing Lenin in the early years of the Revolution may be seen daily in a hall specially set aside for the purpose, and the voice of the leader is to be heard in the record of his speech dedicated to the memory of Sverdlov.

The museum is steadily extending, the halls being continually replenished with new historical documents, pictures and sculptures of Lenin and Stalin, archive material exhibited for the first time. The halls devoted to Lenin the patriot were considerably extended during the war. New exhibits shown in connection with the twentieth anniversary of Lenin's plan for electrifying the country included a map showing the present stage of electrification in the U.S.S.R., material containing Lenin's statements concerning electrification and other documents.

The Central Lenin Museum has developed into one of the most popular scientific and cultural centres in the country. Figures speak for themselves. In the ten years of its existence, the museum has been visited by six million nine hundred thousand people. These include not only Muscovites, but visitors from every Soviet republic—workers, peasants, intellectuals: young men and women, as well as girls and boys of school age. During the war the museum was visited by one million fifty-six thousand Soviet Army men, and the numerous entries in the visitors' book contributed by officers and men, and by those who did their bit in the war effort in the rear

Lenin's study in the Kremlin

A room in the Ulyanovs' home. Lenin Museum in Ulyanovsk

are convincing evidence that the visits to the museum inspired soldiers on the battle front and workers, peasants and intelligentsia on the home front.

Visitors from foreign countries include members of Trade Unions, youth and sports' clubs, scientists, statesmen and workers. The impressions carried away with them are recorded in the visitors' book in English, French, Rumanian, Finnish, Chinese, Iranian and other languages. Here is what Professor Adamar, member of the Paris Academy of Sciences, voicing thoughts expressed by many of the other visitors, has written: "I have seen an unforgettable monument which the U.S.S.R. has raised to a great man."

The Lenin Museum has branches in the most important towns in the country: Leningrad, Kiev, Tbilisi, and besides these, smaller museums have at different times been opened in all the places where Lenin lived for any length of time.

MUSEUM AT ULYANOVSK

In the town of Simbirsk renamed Ulyanovsk, we can still see the house where Vladimir Ulyanov—Lenin was born in 1870, and where he spent his childhood. This now historical house, built well over a century ago, was opened to the public as a museum in 1929. In the ten rooms of the house the appointments and furniture are just as they were in Lenin's boyhood days when he lived at home. Many of his personal belongings have been preserved, in the room that used to be his, visitors can see his writing table with the old writing set; his cushion, music and books.

Architects are adopting special measures to preserve the little house of the Ulyanov family for posterity.

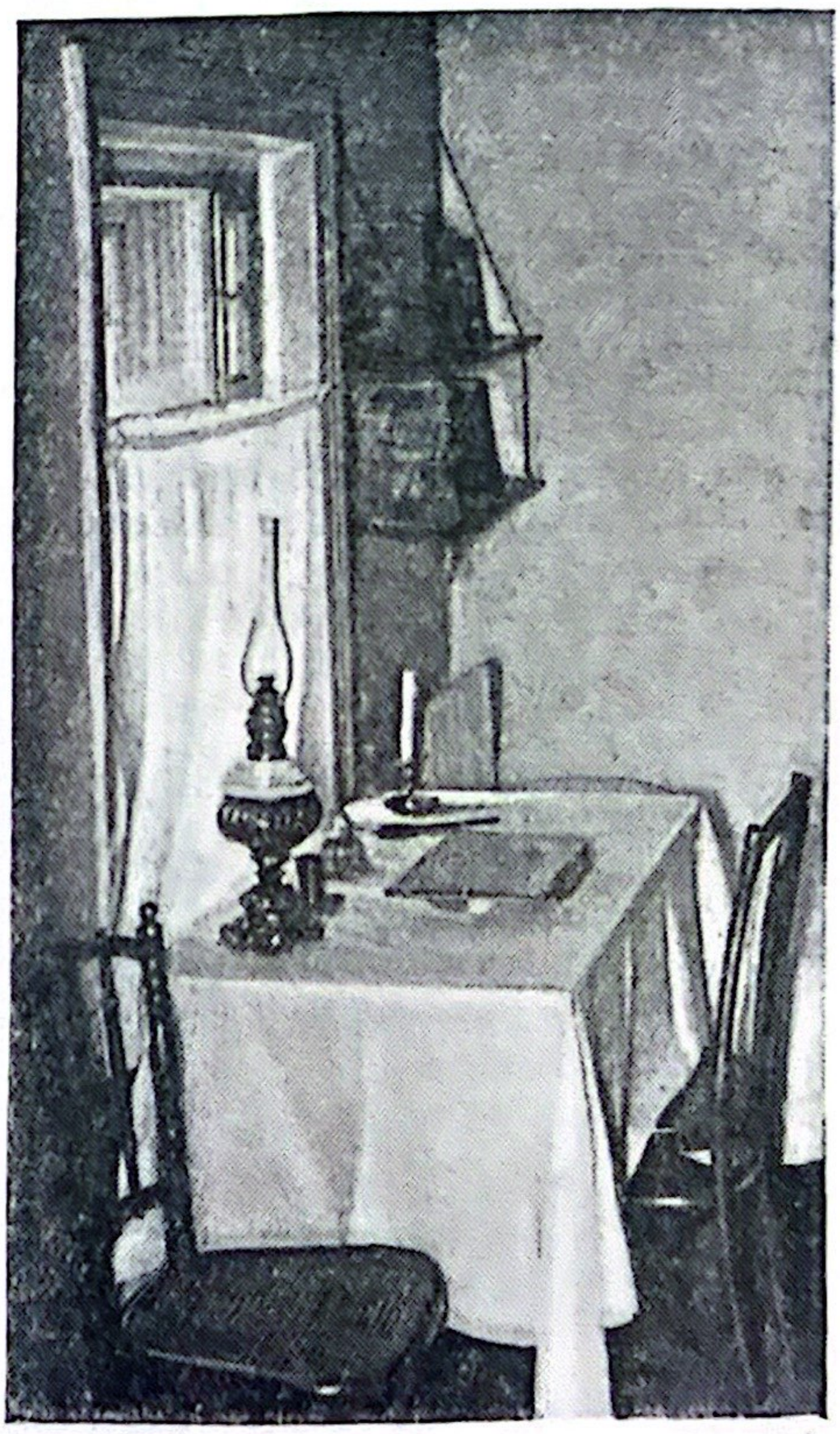
THE KAZAN HOUSE

In 1937 a Lenin Museum-House was opened at Kazan where the Ulyanov family lived in the months between September, 1888, and May, 1889. As in Ulyanovsk, the original domestic arrangements have been restored.

Here is the table covered with a white cloth at which Lenin worked, the old cane-bottomed chairs, the simple iron bedstead, the bedding. Here are the books Lenin read, editions of the sixties and eighties of last century—the newspapers *Novoye Vremya* (New Times) *Russkaya Mysl* (Russian Thought). Among the magazines and books we see a glass inkwell that once belonged to Lenin's grandfather and which Vladimir Ilyich used when he lived in exile in the village of Kokushkino, not very far from Kazan.

THE VILLAGE OF SHUSHENSKOYE

The years of exile between 1897 and 1900, Lenin spent in the village of Shushenskoye, Yenisei Gubernia. In the early months of his exile, until the summer of 1898, he lived in a house which had formerly belonged to a peasant by the name of Zyrianov, later moving



Lenin's room in Kazan

Lenin's house, now the Lenin Museum, in the village of Shushenskoye

into the house of a woman named Petrova where he lived to the end of his exile. Both houses have been converted into museums.

In the room Lenin occupied in the Zyrianov house visitors can see a wooden bedstead, four plain chairs, a barometer, a portrait of Chernyshevsky, with an inscription on it in Lenin's handwriting, some bookshelves and other personal effects.

In the Petrova house, where Lenin worked on the concluding chapters of his *Development of Capitalism in Russia*, the furniture and other objects exhibited give the visitor an impression of the surroundings in which Lenin lived in one of the early periods of his revolutionary work and struggle.

A LITTLE HOUSE ON THE RIVER BANK

For a short while in the year 1900, Lenin lived at Podolsk, a town not very far from Moscow. His family also lived there at the time when his younger brother, Dmitri Ilyich, had been exiled from the capital.

The trim little house surrounded by a garden stands close to the water, on the bank of the river Pakhra. Vladimir Ilyich occupied a small attic under the roof where he worked and received friends from Moscow and other parts of the country. In 1937, the whole house was turned into a museum.

There are Lenin museums in other towns as well; at Ufa, for example, where Vladimir Ilyich lived for some time in the year 1900, together with his wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya; and at Pskov, where Lenin stayed in February of the same year. Of particular interest are some memorial spots in the city that now bears the name of Lenin.

PLACES ASSOCIATED WITH LENIN'S MEMORY IN LENINGRAD

Among the places in Leningrad connected with the life and labours of Lenin and now preserved as historical monuments is the museum in the apartment in Rozhdestvensky, now Soviet Street, which was the home of Sergei Alliluyev. Here Lenin lived in hiding from the Provisional government in July, 1917. Stalin also lived here in the same year and in the same apartment.

There is another museum-house open to visitors in Kherson Street where, in the year 1917, Lenin drafted the famous decrees *On the Peace* and *On the Land*, and his call *To the Citizens of Russia*; the flat on Serdobolnaya

The house where Lenin lived at Podolsk

Street where Lenin lived secretly after his return from Finland in October, 1917, and where his work in preparing the armed uprising was done; another apartment on the embankment of the river Karpovka, where the historical meeting of the Central Committee of the Party took place on October 10, 1917, presided over by Lenin and Stalin and where Lenin's resolution on the armed uprising was adopted.

Other places associated with the memory of Lenin in the vicinity of the city are the shed on "Razliv" Station where Lenin found refuge from the persecution of the Provisional government after the July days of 1917; the "Shanty" monument near the same station where during the haymaking of that year Lenin lived disguised as a mower, and the little house in the village of Yalkala on the Karelian Isthmus, another of his temporary residences.

WORKERS IN ART FACING AN IMPORTANT TASK

During the past few weeks meetings devoted to the immediate tasks confronting workers in various fields of art have been held in all theatres, cinema studios and art workers' trade union organizations throughout the U.S.S.R. Members of the Soviet intelligentsia, who have always regarded the interests of the people as their own interests, spoke of "raising the ideological standards of art," and of the "ties which bind art to the people and to modern life."

Below we give extracts from addresses on this subject by men and women prominent in the various fields of arts and letters.

Alexandra Yablochkina, People's Artist of the U.S.S.R.:

I am a Soviet actress and dearly love my country, I am proud of her, proud of my people and of their heroic and astounding deeds in peace and war. I sincerely want to serve my people, and the Party which, headed by Stalin, is leading us from victory to victory. How and in what way can I be of service to my people? I can serve with my art. It must be living, vibrant, up-to-date. . . .

I love the classics but together with the heroines of the Soviet Union I want to struggle, to achieve, to keep in step with the people. As long as I can draw breath, as long as I have strength and can think I want to fufill that which had been allotted me; by my work I want to justify my title of the People's Artist.

Alexander Fadeyev, General Secretary of the Union of Soviet Writers:

The Russian classics were great because they understood the life of the people and were able to detect the progressive elements of that life. If we follow the development of Russian literature from Pushkin to Turgenev and Tolstoy we see that a splendid gallery of characters endowed with positive qualities was presented in their works! Our wonderful Soviet people offer a wealth of material for the creation of the positive character in art. First and foremost it is for our playwrights and theatrical people to see the world with the eyes of this progressive personality.

Solomon Mikhoels, Art Director of the State Jewish Theatre:

An actor often thinks that if he has talent, if he is gifted by nature and has intuition, he can spontaneously reveal all the traits of a character. No one can entirely depend on the elemental, intuitional element in creative art. The goal ahead can only be achieved by ideological purposefulness. Talent alone does not make an actor. He must be an artist ideologically equipped.

Mikhail Kedrov, Actor, Producer, Art Director of Moscow Art Theatre:

Today, every artist must cast an introspective look into the work he's doing and try to realize to the full his great responsibility to his people and country. An artist must have a profound understanding of life—for it is only through studying and comprehending the things which go to make up the life of the people that we shall be able to meet the demands made on us, actors, by the people. One cannot conceive of an artist without the ideas that inspire his art. The actor cannot hope to influence his audience if he himself remains passive.

Alexander Tairov, Art Director of Moscow Kamerny Theatre:

The artist must have an acute sense of the essentials of the people's life and interests. The theatre must render ideological service to the people; that has always been the ruling principle of the leading figures of our theatre. Theatrical art cannot exist if it is removed from life and remains aloof from the stirring questions of the time.

Akaki Khorava, Georgian Actor:

Love, friendship, hatred, patriotism, wrath are emotions that have existed for thousands of years, but which are made manifest in different ways by different social classes and in different epochs. The modern Soviet hero has come into the foreground of public life, living the life of his country, profoundly feeling all that concerns it, be it the events at the Peace Conference in Paris, or at the UNO General Assembly in New York. That means that workers in Soviet art must keep abreast of current events at home and abroad; they must make their art react to these events and infect the general public with their enthusiasm. Failing this they will leave their audiences cold, for the public does not want an art devoid of emotion.

Alexander Korneichuk, Playwright:

We must educate our Soviet youth to be fearless and worthy of their great country. Our youth have come into the possession of that for which the best sons of our country fought and died. The youth of today did not have to go through the hard school of class struggle as did the older generation. These young men and women that we have been called upon to

educate will be the builders of our state ten or fifteen years hence. Their education is a tremendous task.

Ruben Simonov. Actor, Producer, Art Director of the Vakhtangov State Theatre:

Speaking of modern art we must never forget that the theatre cannot advance unless moved by the revolutionary spirit. Soviet actors and producers must seek new theatrical forms suited to the ideas they wish to convey to the people.

Yuri Zavadsky, Producer, Art Director of Mossoviet Theatre:

We all have our dreams of an art on a higher level than that which we now offer to our public. Our public demands this, too. The decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, which requires of the Soviet theatre productions on a higher intellectual level met with the general approval of all theatre workers. The Party decision stresses the fact that we must carry on the traditions of the great Russian art that has always served the people. And it is these traditions, this sense of responsibility to the people, this unity with the life of the people that should permeate our creative art.

Ivan Pyriev, Cinema Producer:

Entering upon a new phase in its historical development the Soviet people make big and serious demands on all workers in art. The tastes of Soviet men and women have matured, and their demands have become more far-reaching and serious than before. If you are a man of progressive views—a writer, a producer, "an engineer of the human soul", it is your duty to have a thorough knowledge of all that is new and glorious, of all that is going on in your country.

Karo Alabyan, General Secretary of the Union of Soviet Architects:

A task of exceptional state importance has been entrusted to Soviet architects: the fulfilment of the huge building program contained in the current five-year plan. If he means to solve this task efficiently, the architect's work must be on a high ideological level and he must show a genuine interest in socialist construction. We must never forget that a work of Soviet architecture is not merely a professional achievement of an individual architect but is part of Soviet building activities embodying the means and efforts of the whole people.

Pavel Markov, Art Director of Nemirovich-Stanislavsky Opera Theatre:

The source of the actor's art is the contemplation and study of real life. But it is not sufficient, however, to pay attention to some special fragments of life without a comprehensive grasp of modernity. The whole must not be sacrificed to the part. It is only by extending his social experience that the actor will gain a real insight into life and rise to ideological generalization, expressing in single scenes the very essence of modernity.

DOSTOYEVSKY MEMORIAL MEETING AT THE GORKY INSTITUTE OF WORLD LITERATURE, ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF THE U.S.S.R.

In connection with the one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of F. M. Dostoyevsky's birth a memorial meeting was held at the Gorky Institute of World Literature, Academy of Sciences. Many professors, students, men prominent in the world of science, literature and art and representatives of Moscow's intelligentsia and the general public attended the meeting.

A comprehensive paper on the writings of Dostoyevsky was read by Professor Valeri Kirpotin, who is at present writing a monograph on the great Russian writer.

Kirpotin stressed that Dostoyevsky was one of the greatest writers of all times and that his works had exerted a powerful influence on world literature. His books are still read with undiminished interest, evoking, as heretofore, passionate argument.

Great Russian writers and thinkers, such as Pushkin, Gogol and Belinsky taught Dostoyevsky to have faith in man, in the nobleness of his instincts and the justice of his strivings. Dostoyevsky's passionate admiration for the ideals advocated by Belinsky is expressed in his novel *Poor People*. The book is instinct with faith in man; it is a vindication of man's right to happiness. Dostoyevsky appeals to his readers to help those deprived of rights—the destitute brothers, those in whom lives the spirit of humanity. He awakens a feeling of repulsion for those who turn away from the fallen and humiliated. The last and most downtrodden of men is also a man and my brother—this is the central theme of the novel.

V. Kirpotin shows that Dostoyevsky's participation in the Petrashevsky's revolutionary circle was a logical phase in the writer's mental evolution in the 1840's. His activities in this circle led to repressions on the part of the tsarist government—arrest and a sentence of death which was commuted to penal servitude and exile.

In the *House of the Dead* and *The Insulted and Injured* Dostoyevsky appealed to compassion, but aroused indignation instead. These works were accepted not only as the voice of Sorrow but as a cry of Vengeance.

The story of Raskolnikov (*Crime and Punishment*) is told with tremendous psychological force and acquired considerable social import. Progressive critics of the day, headed by Pisarev, pointed out that the protest voiced by Raskolnikov as an individual was a mistaken line of conduct, and that only a political struggle waged by the masses could lead to a healing of the sores of social life.

As an artist, Professor Kirpotin said further, Dostoyevsky probed into such depths of the human mind where no writer before him had penetrated. Dostoyevsky became an example for writers of all nationalities on the art of penetrating into the inner life of man.

"It is with profound emotion and sympathy," said Kirpotin, "that we still read Dostoyevsky's books in which he prays and beseeches us to relieve the sufferings of mankind."

* * *

The Dostoyevsky Museum in Moscow has recently seen an increased number of visitors—writers, critics and actors of the Moscow theatres. Excerpts from Dostoyevsky's books were read aloud to visitors by Lydia Koreneva and Valentina Popova.

At a soirée arranged by the State Literary Museum, the literary critic A. Slonimsky read a paper on *The Writings of Dostoyevsky*. The program also contained a dramatized version of Dostoyevsky's *The Gambler*, read by Alexander Glumov.

The *State Literary Publishing House* is bringing out a one-volume edition of Dostoyevsky's more popular works. A mass edition of five hundred thousand copies of the novel *Poor People* is also being published.

An annotated catalogue (370 pages) of Dostoyevsky MSS. has been compiled by the Lenin State Library in Moscow.

AT THE WRITERS' CLUB

To the Memory of Alexander Chavchavadze

"Happiness and beauty are the foundation of human life," said Alexander Chavchavadze, an outstanding Georgian poet. His brilliant life and tragic death offer a vivid illustration of Russian history of the first half of the 19th century.

Son of Garsevan Chavchavadze, a prominent Russian statesman, he was born in St. Petersburg, in 1786, and went to live in Georgia when a boy of thirteen. Five years later he was exiled to a small provincial town for participating in a rebellion against the Russian autocracy. Thanks to influential family connections, however, and his "youthful years," as the official document has it, he received the tsar's pardon when his term of exile expired. After this Alexander Chavchavadze's destiny was bound with the Russian army. In the years 1813 and 1814 when he was aide-de-camp to General Barclay-de-Tolly, he took part in the march of the Russian army through Europe.

Later he held some important military and administrative posts in the Caucasus. An incident that speaks for his freedom-loving mind and his sympathies for the Decembrist rising of 1825, is his refusal to obey the order to arrest the Decembrist Rayevsky and reduce him to the ranks.

Chavchavadze belonged to those progressive circles in Georgia that supported fraternal ties between the Russian and the Georgian peoples.

Chavchavadze died in the year 1846 from injuries received in a carriage accident. The horses shied and bolted; the poet was thrown from his seat and dashed against a pile of stones.

Like another remarkable Georgian poet, Nikoloz Baratashvili, Chavchavadze never lived to see his writings in print, the first collection of his verses appearing only in 1881. And it was not before 1940, in Soviet times, that a complete Academy edition of his works was published.

Chavchavadze's verses have time and again been translated by Russian poets; they have now become known to wide circles of Soviet readers.

The centenary of his death was marked by an interesting evening in the Writers' Club.

"He was a man of grand style, imbued with the traditions of chivalry," Nikolai Tikhonov said of Chavchavadze in his opening speech. "He lived in an epoch of men of action. A personality of intense vitality—soldier, poet and philosopher—his life was fraught with struggle and marked with valourous deeds, the greatest of which was his poetry. In the field of poetry he blazed new trails. Despite the painful state of his homeland, the wars and devastation of which he was destined to witness, that man was an optimist, a romanticist, endowed with a rich inner life, who deserved his name of 'melodious and radiant poet.'"

Tikhonov spoke of the golden-letter list of names of Georgian poets of that epoch: Baratashvili, Orbeliani, and others; of their ties with Russian literature and their influence on Georgian poetry.

Chavchavadze was a close friend of Pushkin and his daughter Nina was wife of the great Russian playwright Griboyedov. It was in Chavchavadze's translations that Pushkin's verse first sounded in Georgian.

An interesting paper on the poetical art of Chavchavadze was read by Victor Goltsev, the expert in Georgian literature. He gave a subtle analysis of the elements of novelty in the poetry of Chavchavadze who broke the canons of Georgian poetry which had for centuries lived under the influence of the East.

Pavel Antokolsky, Mark Tarlovsky, Vera Zvyagintseva, Alexander Kochetkov and other poets and translators read their translations of Chavchavadze, marking the successive phases of his art. The evening concluded with a recitation of Chavchavadze's *Marvellous Love* in the English translation by the Georgian poetess, Venera Urushadze, which admirably conveyed the rhythm and sonority of the Georgian poet's lines.

MUSIC

SOME NEW WORKS BY SERGEI PROKOFYEV

Two new compositions by Sergei Prokofyev, First Sonata for violin and pianoforte, and a symphonic suite *Zolushka*, have recently been heard for the first time from Moscow concert platforms.

Like the cantata *Alexander Nevsky*, like the incidental music to the film *Ivan Grozny* and the opera *War and Peace*, this violin sonata is permeated throughout with the national spirit, reflecting the austere grandeur of the "bylini" epics. The First Movement is conceived as contemplation of the history of Russia and is a calmly flowing narrative of the past. The severe warlike spirit of the Second Movement depicts a fierce clash with hostile forces; the Third Movement is a sorrowful lyrical song. In the Finale we hear the grand melodies and quaint rhythms of the legends about the Russian titans. The excellent interpretations of the violinist David Oistrakh and the pianist Lev Oborin, turned the ample opportunities the sonata presented to the best advantage.

In the Symphonic Suite, *Zolushka* (Cinderella) musical episodes from the first two acts of Sergei Prokofyev's ballet of the same name enter into the composition. The poetical story of love, of the eternal yearning for happiness resounds in the music of the Suite with remarkable force. Now, it is a portrait in sounds of Cinderella permeated by tender sadness (Introduction), now, it is her wicked enemies whose images bring so many witty musical cartoons (*Dance With Shawls*, and *The Quarrel*). We hear the delicately handled fantastic filigree pictures and captivating dances of the ballet (*Mazurka*, *Waltz*). The images of the fairy tale, the dances, the orchestration are presented in a superb symphonism.

EREVAN CONSERVATORY'S TWENTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY

The State Conservatory of Erevan, capital of Soviet Armenia, is twenty-five years old. In the quarter of a century of its existence not one but many generations of performers and teachers, now working in the towns of Armenia and the whole Soviet Union, have been trained there.

The school, a veritable centre of musical culture of the Armenian Soviet Republic, is headed by the well-known conductor Constantine Saradzhiyev, one of the oldest Armenian musicians.

CHAMBER CONCERTS IN TBILISI

The Rust'veli Concert Hall at Tbilisi, capital of Soviet Georgia, is witnessing a series of chamber concerts—an undertaking that will greatly contribute to the further development of musical performance in Georgia, and acquaint audiences with all that is best in the chamber music of the composers of Georgia, Russia and Western Europe, as well as those of the Soviet republics of the Ukraine, Belorussia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and others.

In the programs of these concerts prominent place is given to concert lectures devoted to the work of various composers, and we hear that popular concert talks for children of school age are about to be started.

THEATRE

THE VICTORS

The Leningrad Pushkin Theatre, the first playhouse to stage Boris Chirskov's *The Victors*,[1] presents the play as an epic of victory; a lofty romantic drama of strong personalities.

The part of Army General Muravyov is played by Nikolai Simonov, who is known to the public for his portrayal of Peter the Great in the film of the same name. The figure of General Muravyov, weighty and purposeful, is very real. Strategist and politician, he is a man who has made a close and devoted study of the Stalin art of victory and is using his knowledge to good effect.

The company also portrays the rank and file soldiers splendidly. A. Borisov gives a discreet, true-to-life rendering of Stepan, the old soldier; the man's words sound like apt popular sayings. In spare precise strokes A. Chekayevsky portrays Lieutenant Fyodorov, the defender of one of the houses in Stalingrad, converted into an impregnable fortress... The new production of the Leningrad theatre presents an ensemble, harmonious both in conception and style.

A NEW PRODUCTION AT THE MOSCOW THEATRE FOR THE YOUNG SPECTATOR

The golden deed of a young Soviet girl, Hero of the Soviet Union, Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya still holds an irresistible appeal for poets, playwrights and artists. Margarita Aligher devoted her *Zoya*—a poem which was found worthy of a Stalin Prize—to that glorious young heroine. Songs have been written about Zoya, the music of which was contributed by Yuri Shaporin, Nikolai Chemberdzhi, Aram Khachaturyan, Gavriil Popov, and others. There are sculptural and painted portraits of Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya and the cinema film *Zoya* by Lev Arnshtam is dedicated to her. And now we have just seen the première of a romantic drama by Margarita Aligher—*A Fairy Tale About the Truth*, and again the leading personage is Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya.

In 1941, Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, then a schoolgirl with another year of lessons before her, joined a partisan detachment operating in Moscow Region. She was given a mission in a village occupied by fascists where she was to

A Fairy Tale About the Truth, staged by the Theatre for the Young Spectator

[1] See *Soviet Literature*, No. 7, 1946.

set fire to a barn in order to distract the enemy's attention from the main body of partisans engaged in an important operation. Zoya fell into the hands of the Germans who subjected her to fiendish tortures but failed to get one single word out of her betraying her companions. The fascists hanged the young girl in the public square. In her last moments she found strength enough to address a patriotic message to the Russian people who had been driven at the point of the bayonet to witness the execution.

The diary she left reveals the day dreams of her youth, her strivings for the happiness of all, her desire for a heroic deed in honour of her country and of mankind. Zoya's only brother who fought bravely in the war and was also awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union was killed in the capture of Berlin.

The author of *The Fairy Tale About the Truth* has shown in her play how Zoya's heroic character was formed; how she grew up from a child; how her lofty and devoted patriotism was nurtured. The action of the play opens some years before the war with scenes from every-day life of a Soviet schoolgirl. Then come episodes from the early days of the war, fascist air raids on Moscow, the defence of the city and life in a guerrilla detachment. The tortures, the hideous torment suffered by Zoya are not shown on the stage. Her staunchness and devotion, her heroic readiness to sacrifice herself for the good of her country are revealed in a number of lyrical episodes showing her in all the purity of a mind that was only just unfolding.

The play is written in prose and it is only in the fourth act when Zoya, in delirium after her torture, dreams of her family, her friends, her mother, her beloved, that the text passes into verse. It was the romantic aspect of the play that appealed most to the theatre's cast and the regisseur, Rafail Suslovich. The performance runs smoothly—everything is well thought out, the mounting is colourful and expressive, the décor does credit to the artist, M. Varpekh.

A SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT—NEW PRODUCTION AT CENTRAL CHILDREN'S THEATRE

A Special Assignment is a new comedy for children by the poet Sergei Mikhalkov. The action is laid in the Russian countryside immediately after the war. The dramatis-personae are Soviet schoolboys with their minds still teeming with war impressions, while in the forest and around the village church battered tanks and other visible relics of the war, dumb witnesses of recent fighting, are still to be found.

The game of soldiers the boys are playing is strictly in accordance with the rules of warfare.

The children try their very hardest to imitate Soviet Army discipline and fighting practices. The two detachments are called Southerners and Northerners respectively. The former have dug in in the forest, the latter put up a defence in the village. The Southerners are preparing an offensive. Their crack scout is Zhenya Khvat, a girl who disguised herself as a boy when she found that the rules of the game did not allow girls to be taken into the "ranks". But things turn out so that it is Zhenya, who gets the special assignment because she has no equal among her fellow scouts. She puts on her girl's dress once more and ventures into the enemy positions where she contrives to worm out all the war secrets and even make off with the enemy colours.

The game is played in such good earnest and with so much enthusiasm that grown-ups find themselves drawn into the operations. A captain, for example, who is staying with some friends cannot hold himself aloof from the fun and forgetting that he has to be setting off on his return journey remains as consultant on the "Southern" side, while a senior lieutenant who finds himself a casual birthday guest in the village where the Northerners are encamped, actively helps in the defence.

Simple as is the subject it has served the playwright as groundwork for a light, truthful and witty play. The performance, staged by producer Rappoport, gives an impression of natural ease and faithfulness to life.

The troupe of the Central Children's Theatre boasts a number of excellent actresses, expert performers of children's and adolescent parts. On the present occasion the cast is reinforced by twelve male heroes between the ages of ten to fourteen, admirably impersonated by adult professional actors.

Zhenya Khvat, the leading role, is acted by L. Chernysheva, the other roles are played by A. Kudryavtseva, M. Vakhonina, A. Oznobkina, J. Bulkina and G. Ivanova, the latter a student of the theatrical school attached to the theatre.

A Special Assignment, *staged by the Central Children's Theatre*

CINEMA

JUDGEMENT OF THE PEOPLES

The new documentary film telling the awful tale of the Nuremberg trial is arousing burning interest among Soviet cinema audiences.

It is a stirring narrative. The subject is not only hedged in the walls of the court building; the film discloses the foul deeds of fascism, telling of its treacherous designs against humanity and demonstrating with convincing force the final triumph of truth and justice.

The film opens with the words of Generalissimo Stalin: "Let these butchers know that they will not escape responsibility for their crimes or elude the hand of retribution of the tormented nations." These words were said on November 6, 1942; the vast territory of the U.S.S.R. was ablaze with the flames of war. The enemy was at the gates of Stalingrad. But even at that grim time the doom of fascism was sealed. . . And here is Victory—the opening shots show Soviet tanks with flying banners bearing down on Berlin. The Reichstag is on fire. With hands raised the German officers and generals emerge from their basements. Göring is arrested. Keitel surrenders. Jodl is caught. And then Ribbentrop.

They are all brought to Nuremberg. The film carries us back into the recent past. We see an immense stadium. . . Hitler addressing a great crowd; he is thundering out his gangster slogans. S.S. troops are marching along. . . And then we see the last march of the fascist chieftains. . . Göring and his associates entering the hall of the court through a narrow doorway. The judges take their seats. The trial begins.

Witnesses for the prosecution pass in gruesome procession. The victims of Maidanek, Oswieçim, Babi Yar, of the death camps. Denouncing—calling for vengeance! We see the prisoners turning away their eyes from the horrible witnesses; we see the nervous twitching of Rosenberg's face, we see Streicher wincing as he looks.

Hitler's heinous industries. . . The hell fires of Maidanek; the pits piled high with corpses; stacks of bales stuffed full with women's hair torn from the heads of victims together with the scalps. Bars of soap made from human fat are laid on the table before the judges. Attached to the desk are fragments of human skin specially treated for the manufacture of ladies' bags and attaché cases.

And again we see the faces of the instigators of all this brutality—the leading men of Hitler Germany. Exposed . . . utterly exposed.

The investigation has come to an end. The nations of the world are awaiting the sentence. The names of twelve of the prisoners are pronounced, and after each name, the words: "To be hanged". But some of the criminals have been spared the merited penalty and the member of the Tribunal for the U.S.S.R. reads his special opinion.

The sentence is passed and the judgement of the peoples is consummated. The film concludes with the words: "May the Nuremberg trial act as a severe warning to all warmongers. May it serve the cause of peace throughout the world." The sentinel keeping guard over an enduring democratic peace is, as before, as always, the Soviet Union.

Speaking of his work on the *Judgement of the Peoples*, Roman Carmen, author and producer of the film, gave us some interesting sidelights.

"For some three hundred days," he said, "our group of cameramen made shots in the Palace of Justice at Nuremberg. We wanted to record every phase of a trial unprecedented in history. The conditions of our work were far from easy. It was not allowed to take shots in the hall as that would disturb the proceedings. Three boxes made of soundproof glass were set up specially for the camera men and photo correspondents (of whom something over a hundred were in Nuremberg). It is from these boxes that the shots were taken. Our attention was mainly focussed on the dock. We tried to record the behaviour of the criminals and their reactions to the different episodes of the trial. Another thing we wanted to show the Soviet cinema-goer was the gigantic mechanism of the court housed in the Palace of Justice. We

The U.S.S.R. cup match

took shots in the depositories where tons of documents incriminating the fascists were kept; we worked in the railway junctions where the trains joining Nuremberg with other countries arrived; we took shots in the corridors of the Court, and in the library.

"The second stage of our work on the film in Moscow was no less important. The Nuremberg shots had to be mounted and episodes required for our film had to be selected from German newsreels. We discovered shots which the fascist ringleaders had hardly expected would ever be made public. They were damning evidence. Soviet men and women herded into slavery; Himmler inspecting the concentration camp at Minsk; Soviet towns and villages burned and sent flying sky high. . . all photographed by the Germans themselves."

THE U.S.S.R. CUP

Football is one of the most popular sports in the U.S.S.R. and the long contest for the U.S.S.R. Crystal Cup—a coveted prize—was the centre of attention in the 1946 sporting season. The crucial event was the decisive match, the finals between Tbilisi Dynamo and Moscow Spartak. The documentary *For the U.S.S.R. Cup* records this match, played in the Moscow Dynamo Stadium.

We see not only the match but get glimpses behind the scenes that are debarred to outsiders by a "no admission" legend on the door. We see the umpire weighing the leather ball and the two captains signing the lists of the participants in the match. Then comes a picture showing the prize awaiting the winner—a crystal cup set in silver. The players put the finishing touches to their boots and the umpire's whistle calls both teams into the field.

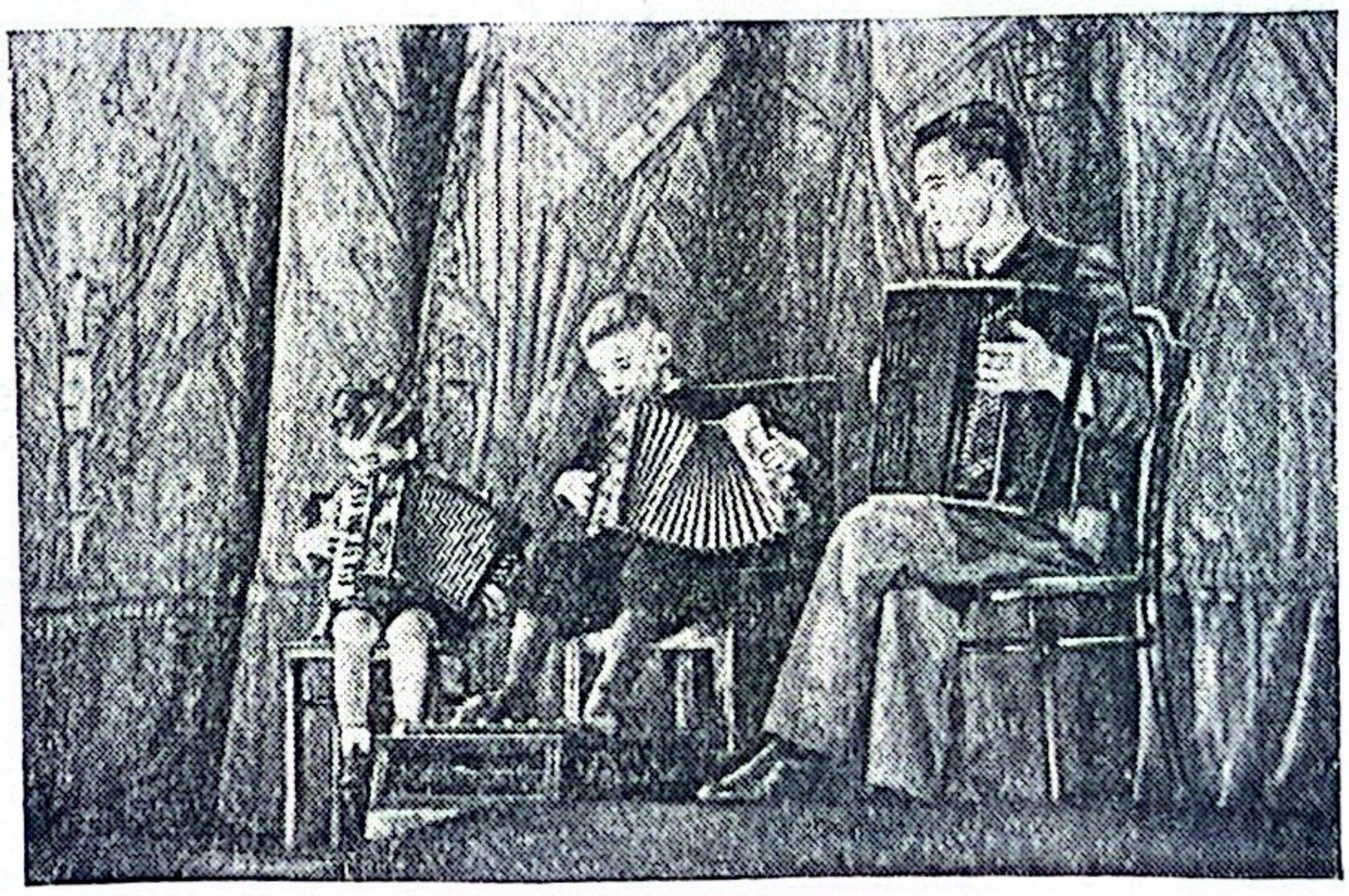
The spirited recital of the announcer, and the clever shooting of all the most exciting moments give a comprehensive picture of the game. Of the five thousand metres of film only about six hundred have been used, but there isn't a dull moment, from beginning to end. The frequent "interludes" when the camera lens passes from field to stands are a treat in themselves. The thundering applause that accompanies a good kick! What colourful figures, what play of expressions! Here is a group of girls whom it wouldn't surprise you to see jumping out of their seats the next minute to see things through down below. Here is an unfortunate fan with a toothache and a bandaged cheek, cheering Spartak with both lungs. His selfless efforts are not in vain. Spartak wins this interesting match so well recorded by producer Yakov Poselsky.

MISCELLANEOUS

FESTIVAL OF AMATEUR TALENT

A review of musical and dancing performance in the U.S.S.R. by amateurs employed in offices and factories, took five months to get through the colorful variety of its programs. Some three hundred thousand men and women throughout the country took part in the concerts. "The Best of the Best" appeared in the concluding concert in Moscow, and on that occasion the magnificent gold and purple hall of the Bolshoi Theatre saw two thousand two hundred and seventeen performers—a number exceeding that of the audience—on its boards. The successive turns of the extensive program made a vivid spectacle. A spirited and temperamental rendering of an ancient war dance with swords by Georgian vintners was followed by an ensemble of Ukrainian bandura players who were heard in a heartfelt song called *My Thoughts*. There was an old-time dance, *Arkan*, by timber cutters and raftsmen from Transcarpathia, and then the stage was occupied by an ensemble of scientists—the Symphonic Orchestra sponsored by the Moscow House of Scientists which gave an admirable performance of some works by Rimsky-Korsakov. Two old Russian songs, *The Mountain Ash* and *In the Fields* were played by railwaymen on the ancient "gusli" . . . Each nationality brought to the capital of their country the peculiar charm of the original art.

The concert concluded by a great dance performance. A day of sunshine. . . Birch trees covered with autumn-gold. A river, hills, and copses in the distance. . . The scene is one of the popular holiday-making on a broad meadow. A chorus of girls singing—holding hands in a circle, moving round and round. The circle opens and one by one the girl dancers, float gracefully around the ring. Then more dancers break into the ring in couples—the movement becomes more and more rapid, the pattern more involved, more dashing. The men in bright patterned silk shirts, the girls in the native vivid-coloured sarafans.



Amateur musicians' contest. The Mozhukhin family from Evpatoria

The dancing spreads like fire, irrepressible as the soul of the people.

Among the audience filling the Bolshoi Theatre were many people prominent in Soviet culture. Here is what some of them whom we asked to tell us of their impressions of the evening said.

Nikolai Golovanov, Conductor:

What pleased me particularly was the immense range of these ensembles and the variety of genres. From the primitive folk song *Barynia* to the unfinished symphony by Schubert; from the primitive comic couplet, to a Glinka waltz. How delightful is this striving of the people for serious musical art!

Alexei Popov, Producer:

Our Soviet land is rich in talents. The people are healthy, vigorous and full of the joy of life—and in their amateur art accomplishments as in all other domains of culture they are advancing by seven-league strides. Our people today are not what they were yesterday: evidence of this is the magnificent development of their creative faculties and requirements in all fields of culture and art.

Olga Lepeshinskaya, Ballerina:

The choreographic display in the final concert was delightful in its variety. There were the national dances of the peoples of the U.S.S.R., classical, humorous, or improvised. They had all been carefully, I should say, lovingly rehearsed. And the final concert was a real festival of youth.

Victor Goltsev, Critic:

One can only wonder at the wide horizons of our people and their grasp of the artistic. This stormy growth of amateur art is convincing evidence of the people's interest in art. You involuntarily recall Lenin's words about the educational role of art in socialist conditions.

EIGHT HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF MOSCOW

In the Central State Archives quantities of documents bearing on the history of Moscow are preserved. Among the greatest treasures are fragments from the Sofius, Vosnesensk and Nikon chronicles containing the earliest information concerning Moscow. We see contracts and ecclesiastical documents issued by the Grand Princes of Moscow, Ivan Kalita and Dmitri Donskoy. Among the 15th- and 16th-century deeds we find valuable documents relating to Moscow's political and trading relations with England, France, Austria, Poland, Greece, Denmark, Sweden, Persia and Turkey. The volume of material increases with the years. The number of deeds preserved from the 17th century is one hundred thousand. They are lying on their shelves in the shape of huge scrolls.

There are some very interesting documents among them; one, for example, dated 1669, speaks of men recruited as sailors "to go with the guns to the village of Dedinovo, where lies the newly-built ship named "The Eagle". There is a special deed in the archives regarding this, Russia's first warship.

An exhibition of the rarest documents is to be opened in April, 1947, on the occasion of the eight hundredth anniversary of the capital.

ART IN THE NEW FIVE-YEAR PLAN

Soviet actors, musicians and painters united in a Trade Union of Workers in Art, take an active part in discussing questions of state importance. At the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Union questions connected with the development of Soviet art in the five-year plan came under consideration.

Addressing the meeting, the Chairman of the Art Committee of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R, Mikhail Khrapchenko, cited figures showing the development scheduled in the field of art under the five-year plan. The number of theatres in the Soviet Union in January, 1946, was 733; the number scheduled by the end of the year 1950, is 898. Of these, 611 are dramatic; 71, for children; 41 opera houses; 51 musical comedy, and 124 puppet theatres. Of musical ensembles there were 239 in the country on January 1, 1946, and the number is to be increased to 410 within the next five years. The number of symphonic orchestras is to rise from 26 to 65; of choruses, from 73 to 127; of orchestras of folk instruments from 27 to 70, etc. The network of circuses, too, is to be extended, and 23 new art museums are to be founded.

Three hundred and fifty-six million rubles is the sum appropriated for building in this department. Sixty-four theatrical buildings are to be restored under the plan, twenty-three new ones to be brought into exploitation and some twenty theatres to undergo overall repairs.

Several new conservatories are to be added to those now in existence (in the towns of Gorky, Rostov-on-Don, Novosibirsk); five new theatrical schools of higher learning, forty-four art schools and five art institutes.

Such an extension in the network of musical institutions, theatres and museums will require new staffs of workers, viz., 5,700 dramatic actors, over 500 producers, 900 opera singers, 3,300 chorus singers, 6,500 musicians for orchestra, and so on.

"The five-year plan for the rehabilitation and development of art institutions is enormous," said Mikhail Khrapchenko. "To carry it out will require considerable effort."

Editor-in-chief: ALEXANDER KARAGANOV